

PC ZONE

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£4.99 July 1997 ISSUE 52

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PC GAMES!

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW!**

X·COM



**KILLER
TRIPLE
CD ISSUE!**
(UK ONLY)

apocalypse

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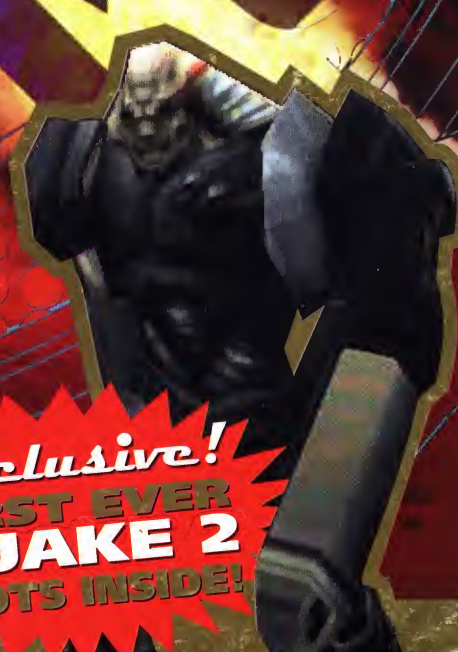
**X-COM APOCALYPSE
PLAYABLE DEMO**

**PLUS! OVER 25
PLAYABLE GAME DEMOS**

IF YOUR CD'S ARE MISSING PLEASE CONSULT YOUR NEWSAGENT

JOHN ROMERO TALKS!
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Exclusive!
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SHOTS INSIDE!**



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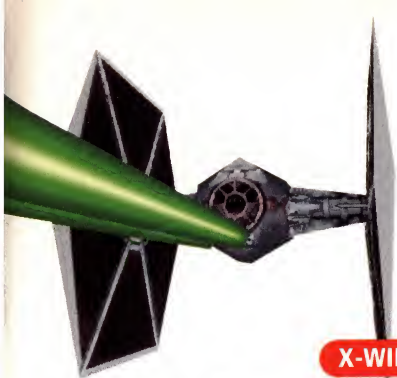


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see the future at www.activision.com

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X-WING VS TIE FIGHTER

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EXTREME ASSAULT

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We sent ace reporter Charlie Brooker out into the big wide world to seek out some geeks. Funnily enough, only one poor soul would admit to being guilty as charged. Do you know him? Would you ever admit to such a thing? Turn to page 118 to find out.



X-COM 3: Apocalypse

Our very own X-COM addict Chris Anderson finally gets his yellow fingernailed hands on a reviewable copy of the awesome X-COM 3: Apocalypse and almost spontaneously combusts with excitement. You should see the mess in the office.

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F1 POWERBOAT 52

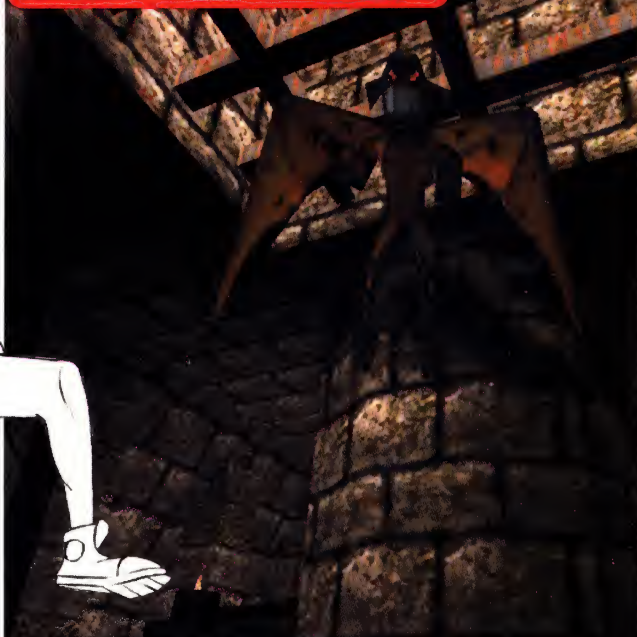


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**PC
ZONE**

19 Bolsover St,
London W1P 7HJ

Tel: 0171 631 1433
Fax: 0171 436 1321
CompuServe: 100142, 2152
CIX: pczone@CIX.co.uk
Website: www.pczone.co.uk

Editor Jeremy Wells 0171 917 3864
Deputy Editor Chris Anderson 0171 917 3901
News Editor Paul Mallinson 0171 917 3830
Art Editor Wag 0171 917 3911
Production Editor Thea Marcuard 0171 917 3914
Disk Editors Daniel Emery 0171 917 7689, Marcus Pullen 0171 917 3857, Gareth Ramsey 0171 917 7646
Reader Services Miles Tudor 0171 917 7693, Alex Taylor
Contributors David McCormack, Sam Syed, Marco Crisari, Wayne Jordan (Design), Clive Andrews, Amaya Lopez, Nudge (Production)
Writers Charlie Brooker, Warren Chrismas, Colin Culk, Steve Hill, Patrick McCarthy, Duncan MacDonald, David McCandless, Paul Presley
Publisher John Davison 0171 917 3981
Group Publisher Tim Ponting 0171 917 7666
Subscriptions Hotline 01454 620070 – cihotline@aol.com
Back Issues 01789 490215
Advertising Manager Mike Shepherd 0171 917 3873
Senior Sales Executive Emma Lewis 0171 917 7708
New Media
Business Manager Martin Conolly 0171 917 3984
Advertising Production Sharon Drumm 0171 917 3937
Marketing Manager Cheryl Hamer 0171 917 7802
Origination Colour-Tech Graphics Ltd 0171 729 3934
Printed in England by ET Heron
Newstrade Manager James Burnay 0171 917 7810
Distribution USM Magazine Distribution 0171 396 8000
Mail Order Manager Sarah Burton 0171 917 7807
Publishing Director Bruce Sawford 0171 917 5538
Circulation Director Sean Farmer 0171 917 7654
Marketing Director Alison Townsend 0171 917 7675
Non-Executive Director Dick Pountain
Financial Director Ian Leggett 0171 917 7679
Managing Director Alistair Ramsay 0171 917 7661
Chairman Felix Dennis



TIPS LINE: 0171 917 7698
Wednesdays 2.30pm – 6pm ONLY!

The August issue of PC Zone goes on sale Thursday 3 July



ABC 49,655

PC Zone is published monthly by Dennis Publishing Ltd. Company registered in England, number 1138891. Entire contents © 1997 Felden Productions

CD ZONE



Help!

The CD not working? HD playing up? The PC's being a total bast? Don't worry - phone our helpline and sort yourself out pronto!

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any weekday between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone ABT on 01708 250250
Any weekday between 11am and 6pm
(Please DO NOT phone the PC Zone office as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either helpline, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call
- If this is not possible, note down all relevant information ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

No CD?

If you are unable to get your grubby paws on the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HD from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

CD Exchange (52), PC Zone, Dennis Publishing,
19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ

Your details (please print clearly)

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Address:

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Please make cheques payable to:

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CDs from previous issues are also available.

On the discs

This month we've got THREE CDs packed full of playable demos, patches and utilities - including a fantastic deal that gives you FREE time on-line. Each CD requires different installation routines so be sure to follow the instructions carefully. To access the software on this month's CD Zone from Windows 95, pop the CD in the drawer and double-click

on the CD icon on your desktop. Simply double-click on the BROWSER.EXE file and this will launch the CD browser program which will enable you to select and install this month's demos. If you're running your machine under DOS, change to your CD-ROM drive (the default command is usually <D:>). Type <PCZONE.EXE> to launch the browser.

Click here to access the DOS demos on this month's CD

Click here to explore the Internet stuff, cartoons and the Our Price chart

Click here to see how some of the hottest new games are shaping up

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DOS Demos
Our round up of the month's latest DOS games.

Windows
All the latest Windows and Windows 95 demos, Internet essentials and the top utilities that no PC should be without.

Regulars
Cartoons, competitions and more...

Hotshots
Take a look at some games still in development.

C:\

Click here to access the plethora of Windows demos on offer this month

Click here to go back to the C:\ prompt and quit the CD

Installation shortcuts

If for some reason the front end to the CD won't run properly, you can still install each demo by bypassing the front end altogether.

Simply switch to the appropriate directory (as shown on the table below), type the install command (you can either type it in as one long line or press <ENTER> after each back slash) and then press <ENTER>.

For example if you wanted to run the

X COM 3 demo you'd type the following:
Type CD DOSDEMOS <ENTER>

Type CD XCOM <ENTER>

Type CD XCOMAPOC.EXE <ENTER>

The game should then install itself to your hard drive.

Manual installation commands

Demo	Directory/installation line
Aaron vs Ruth	\windemos\gamedemo\laaron\avrdemo.exe
Atomic Bomberman	\windemos\gamedemo\bomb\bomb.bat
Crush Deluxe	\windemos\gamedemo\crush\setup.exe
Dynamite Joe	\windemos\gamedemo\dynamite\95\setup.exe
Havoc	\windemos\gamedemo\havoc\setup.exe
Helicops	\windemos\gamedemo\helicops\helicops.exe
Hunter Hunted	\windemos\gamedemo\hunter\hunt3.exe
Iko San	\windemos\gamedemo\ikosan\95\setup.exe
Krypton Egg	\windemos\gamedemo\krypton\95\setup.exe
NCAA Final 4	\windemos\gamedemo\ncfa\setup.exe
Pandemonium	\windemos\gamedemo\pandemon\setup.exe
Sports Golf	\windemos\gamedemo\golf\autoplay.exe
Tracer	\windemos\gamedemo\tracer\trcrdemo.exe
Terracide	\windemos\gamedemo\tera\setup.exe
Tiger Shark	\windemos\gamedemo\tiger\go.exe
Wild Ride	\windemos\gamedemo\wildride\install.exe
Yoda Stories	\windemos\gamedemo\yodademo\yodademo.exe
XCOM 3	\xcom\xcomapoc.exe

4th GENERATION

ABSOLUTE PINBALL

ERADICATOR

GUIMO II

KATHARSIS

SEEK & DESTROY

SHADOW WARRIOR

VIKINGS II

XCOM 3

MINIMUM SPECIFICATION

You'll need at least a Pentium 75 with 8Mb RAM to run the software on this month's CD-ROM. Many of the programs are designed to run under Windows 95 and as a result, some of them may require 16Mb RAM to run satisfactorily.

Where appropriate, we've included the minimum specifications as a guide to each individual game demo.

X-COM 3: APOCALYPSE

MICROPROSE (DOS/WIN 95)



WELCOME TO OUR EXCLUSIVE DEMO OF MICROPROSE'S STUNNING strategy game, *X-COM 3*. We're not going to bother telling you what all the buttons do because as you'll soon discover, simply placing your mouse cursor over any of the icons and holding it there will give you a description of the icon in question. What we'll do instead is take you through what you need to do initially to get you up and running in the example tactical mission.

1. The first thing you'll see is the mission briefing screen. The icons on the bottom right determine whether you'll be playing the real-time or turn-based version of the demo. For the purposes of this walkthrough, we'll play the real-time game, so click on the watch-face to get started.



2. As you can see, your units are scattered all around the play area, and have yet to encounter any aliens. Your units are in three groups of three (look at the unit screen). Double-click the first figure three and you'll see arrows indicating where your group will go when you take the pause button off. Send your agents to a spot where they aren't exposed. Repeat the process for your other two groups.

3. You're ready for action. Unpause the game (click the top play button on the time controls) and watch all your units walk to the spots you sent them to. If no enemy units are spotted, explore the surrounding area.

4. Sooner or later, the aliens will show up. Pause the game. Click the inward-facing arrows on the top-right of the icon bar and you'll be shown where the offending alien is standing. Are your troops safe from his line of fire? If not, go back to the unit bar and move your troops to safety as you did in step 1. Try and send troops to positions close to the alien but out of his line of fire.

5. Start the clock again. Any of your units that can see the alien will start firing at it. Make sure they're not just standing out in the open firing away like mad or they'll be ex-X-COM agents in no time at all. Once you've despatched any aliens, you'll be free to start roaming the play area again. During the rest of the mission, split your groups up (if they're grouped together and the aliens chuck bombs and things at them, you'll lose them all) and explore the rest of the level. Get your agents to kneel to improve their aim. Get them to run away if they're getting their ass kicked. Most importantly, don't die like a Quentin.

NB: This tactical level doesn't have all the features and functionality of the tactical levels in the full game (you can't use Psionic attacks for example), and bear in mind that the combat element of the game is only a small part of the overall experience. However, there should be enough here to give you an idea of what to expect from the greatest PC strategy game in the world when it comes out. Enjoy!

CONTROLS:

Mouse/keyboard

Specs:

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: Pentium

Graphics: SVGA Vesa card

Sound: All major sound cards

TERRACIDE

EIDOS INTERACTIVE (WINDOWS 95 ONLY)

DESCENT-STYLE BLASTING IS THE ORDER OF THE day in this twisty turny actioner. Those of you with 3D accelerator cards will be messing your pants with joy as soon as this little sucker springs into life – it sure is purdy.

The idea is fairly simple. Shoot more or less everything, pick up the power-ups, shoot some more stuff, and find the exit. A child of six could work that lot out, but if you're a bit more stupid than that, check out the README.TXT file in the installation directory for more information than you could shake a data-stick at.

One handy feature that you probably *wouldn't* be able to guess at is the instant waypoint facility. Basically, this is the videogame equivalent of the crumbs that Hansel and Gretel dropped in the forest: just hit 'W' on your keyboard to place a small, spinning indicator in your current location – handy for letting you work out where you have and haven't been.

Well, that's enough reading for now. Get stuck in, you chicken...

CONTROLS:

Keyboard/mouse/joystick

Keys:

[A]

[Z]

[←] [↑] [↓] [→]

[Q] or [ENTER]

[X]

[C]

[F]

Spacebar

[DELETE]

[PG DN]

[HOME]

[END]

Accelerate

Decelerate

Movement

Fire current weapon

(centrally mounted)

(or joystick for all of the above)

Fire left-mounted weapon

Fire right-mounted weapon

Flare (unlimited, but uses lots of energy)

Strafe (hold down and use direction keys/joystick)

(or joystick with coolie hat)

Strafe left

Strafe right

Strafe up

Strafe down

You can reconfigure these keys within the game, should you wish (press [ALT] to bring up the menus).

[1] [7]

[SHIFT] + [1] [7]

[CONTROL] + [1] [7]

[O]

[G]

[V]

[I] on keypad

[J] on keypad

[ALT]

Weapon select (repeated keypresses if needed)

Select right weapon

Select left weapon

Demount weapon

Zoom in and out according to current player view

External camera views

Toggles shield/munition/charge indicator on HUD

Toggles weapons indicator on HUD

Pause/bring up Windows menus

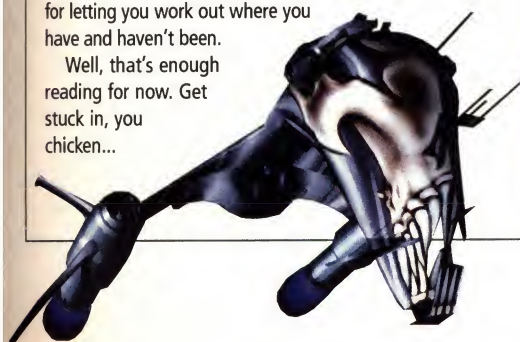
Specs:

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium

Graphics: VGA/SVGA Direct3D

Sound: All major sound cards



SHADOW WARRIOR

EIDOS INTERACTIVE (DOS/WIN 95)

AN ELEVENTH HOUR – AND EXTREMELY WELCOME – addition to this month's cover CD, *Shadow Warrior* is a Ninja-scented first-person gorefest from 3D Realms (the *Duke Nukem 3D* people).

You take control of Simon Groom (slap-headed ex-*Blue Peter* presenter) on a quest to wreak bloody and terrible vengeance upon the band of criminals who stole his faithful companion, Goldie (ex-*Blue Peter* pooch turned drum 'n' bass mastermind) from his stupid sodding farm. To win you'll need to conquer legions of heavily-armed assailants, and then poke Clive Dunn in the eye with an extremely long stick. Or something like that. Who cares? The important thing is it's a great big barrel of laughs. There's vehicles to drive, hordes of oncoming bad guys to slash to ribbons, plenty of comedy vocal samples – even a bit where you get to tinker with a remote control car (we're not making that last bit up, either). We guarantee you'll



love it. This demo version has an interesting 'disability' – you're limited to 50 tries before it throws a massive sulk and refuses to play with you any more. If you're really worried about that, you could always leave it running for ages without switching it off, mind. Anyway, the full version should be extremely available, incredibly soon, but in the meantime you can find out more from the 3D Realms Website (www.3drealms.com) – Kay?



CONTROLS:

Keyboard/mouse/joystick

	Movement
	Commit a jailable offence
	Run
	Strafe
	Jump!
	Duck!
	Choose weapon

Specs:

Memory: 16Mb
Processor: Pentium
Graphics: VGA/SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards



ATOMIC BOMBERMAN

INTERPLAY (WIN 95 ONLY)

GOT A JOYPAD? AND A FRIEND? THEN YOU'RE IN FOR A TREAT. TIME TO snuggle up to our exclusive two-player demo of Interplay's forthcoming *Atomic Bomberman* – a brand new update of one of the most addictive multi-player games of all time.

This is an 'Alpha' version (which means there's still plenty of work to be done on the game), but it should give you a tantalising taster of the pleasures to come. The final release – aside from including *loads* more levels (there's only one in this demo) with weird new features in them – will allow up to *ten* players to go a-bombing at once, either on one machine (with ten daisy-chained SideWinder joypads), across a local network or – and this is the good bit – from all four corners of the Earth via the Internet. That last option promises to be splendid fun, and possibly the only chance you'll get to legally bomb an American in your entire lifetime.

The gameplay may seem simple at first, but there's a complex, lightning-fast strategy game lurking 'neath the surface, like some kind of shadowy swamp monster that can't wait to sink its beastie fangs into you. For a more detailed strategy guide, let your fingers do the walking to page 46 of this very issue... But first here are the basic rules...



How to play

The aim of the game is to destroy your opponent(s) without being caught in the crossfire or blowing yourself up. Each bomb explodes in four directions at once. If the flare from one exploding bomb touches another, both detonate simultaneously (it's possible to cause massive chain reactions in this manner). Parts of the on-screen maze can be destroyed by bombs – often leaving precious power-ups behind. Be quick, because after one minute and thirty seconds, the walls start closing in, fast.

CONTROLS:

Player One:

	Movement
	Drop bomb
	Action (punching etc)

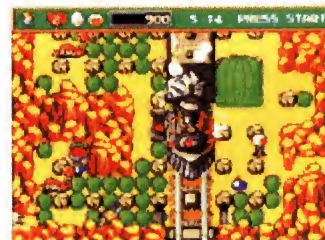
Player Two: Joypad only

Specs:
Memory: 8Mb
Processor: Pentium
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards

Power-ups

Collecting power-ups is of vital importance in a *Bomberman* match. Here we list some of the ones you'll encounter in this demo. The full release obviously promises many more...

Smiling flame	Increases the length of your bomb's flare
Golden flame	Instant 'maximum length' flares
Bomb	Extra bomb (you can now drop more than one at a time)
Triple bomb	'Spoooge' bombs: double-click the 'drop' button to lay an instant line of explosives (assuming you can currently drop more than one)
Boxing glove	Dead handy. Allows you to punch bombs away from you or over obstacles
Kicking foot	Just run into a bomb and you can kick it along the ground
Skull	Random 'disease'. Try <i>not</i> to pick these up. You can destroy them with bombs
Roller skate	Increases your speed
Jelly	'Jelly' bombs (bounce weirdly when thrown or kicked)
Hand	Allows you to pick up bombs as you place them
'Timer' bomb	You can now detonate bombs via remote control!



CD ZONE EXTRA

THERE ARE SO MANY CDS PACKED WITH SO MUCH INCREDIBLE GEAR with your soaraway, tip-top, sexually attractive, arse-fondling *Zone* this month, we simply haven't got room to print the full details on each and every one of them. We've overwhelmed *ourselves* this time, such is our desire to keep you satisfied, honeybaby. Here's what *else* you'll find on your spinning disc of value...



Aaron Vs Ruth (Win 95)

It's not a domestic violence sim, it's a *baseball game*, silly.

Pandemonium (Win 95)

Extremely purdy PlayStation platform conversion.

Yoda Stories (Win 95)

LucasArts' cutesy-pie puzzle game-type thing. With Yoda in it.

Wild Ride (Win 95)

Stuff 'Web surfing' – here's some proper 'water surfing'.

Krypton Egg (Win 95)

Addictive, brightly coloured *Breakout*-type game.

Vikings II (DOS)

Strategy game with a distinctly Nordic bent.

Dynamite Joe (Win 95/3.x)

Like *Boulder Dash*? Then you'll like this, too.

Tracer (Win 95)

Weirdy 3D puzzle game from 7th Level.

Katharsis (DOS)

Side-scrolling shoot 'em up orgy of violence.

Guimo II (Win 95)

Psychedelic arcade craziness with a crap name.

Crush! Deluxe (Win 95)

Another shoot 'em up! Hurrah!

Mixman (Win 95)

Hilarious deck-mixing funk 'em up. See it to believe it.

Iko San (Win 95)

Did we hear someone say *Tetris*?

Absolute Pinball (DOS/Win 95)

Go on – take a guess.



... and loads *more*, including *Sports Golf* from Sierra, a special Lara Croft desktop theme for Windows 95, *Helicops* from 7th Level, and all the usual Internet-related goodies you've come to expect from your cheek-kissing, pelvic-thrusting, thigh-stroking, zip-zap superstar soaraway *Zone*.

Broderbund



Koala Lumpur: JOURNEY TO THE EDGE

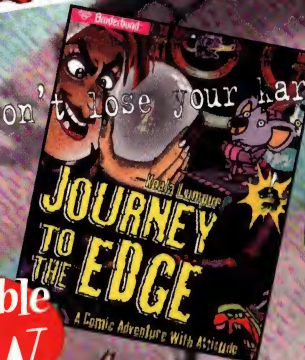


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HOTWIRE your games with the PC ZONE essential selection

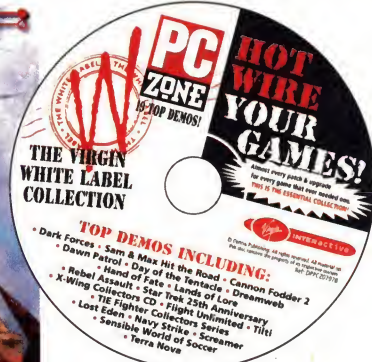
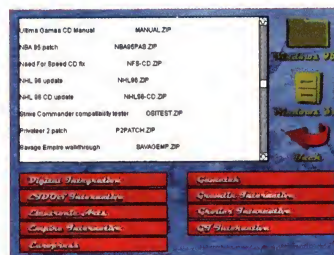
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, A big hand for us because this month we're bringing you THREE CDs. Yup, that's right – three. In case that hasn't quite sunk in yet, we'll say it again, in italic capitals: this month we've brought you *THREE CDs*. Yes folks, your zuper zoaraway Zone has never been such good value for wonga. You'd have to be a toothless, raving imbecile to even contemplate ever buying anything else ever again.

So what's this *Hotwired* CD thing all about, then? Well, we've attached a gigantic hose to the second of this month's *THREE CDs*, and pumped it full of all the latest patches and upgrades for all your favourite games. Not only will this save Internet users loads of download time and shit-yer-pants-phone-bill misery, it'll also give those of you who aren't yet 'on-line' easy access to this kind of material. Proof if proof were needed that we're your best friends in the whole wide world.

To access the *Hotwired* material (via Windows 95) simply run the 'Hotwire.exe' program on the CD and follow the on-screen instructions. All patches are compiled in alphabetical order by distributor, so to find a patch for say, *Privateer 2: The Darkening*, you'd click on the Electronic Arts button and cycle through using the scrollbar. It's as simple as that. These patches will be updated every month, so keep your eyes peeled for the very latest additions. If you get stuck, ring our CD helpline on 01708 250250 any weekday between 9am and 4pm.

But wait! It doesn't end there! There's more! There's *loads* more! There's also a whole bunch of fantastic demos from Virgin's cracking White Label range...

These games cost just between £12.99 and £14.99 in the shops, but that doesn't mean they're in any way second-rate. In fact, they're superb. Just look at the roster of classic titles: *Dark Forces*, *Sam & Max*, *TIE Fighter: Collector's Edition*,



Dawn Patrol, *Screamer*... the hits roll on and on. Sling your eyeballs at the box below for a full lowdown on what's on the CD. If you want to know more, turn to the budget section of the mag on pages 104 and 105 for more information.

To get going, run the *Virgin.exe* program from the CD and follow the instructions on-screen. Most of the demos are DOS only, so if you're running Windows 95 you may have to quit out to DOS mode to install and run the software if the games don't run in a DOS box. Alternatively, quit to DOS mode, switch to the relevant directory and install the game from there in the normal fashion.

INSTALLATION TROUBLE?

If, for reasons beyond the realm of normal human understanding, you have difficulty running the White Label demos, call our CD helpline on 01708 250250 any weekday between 9am and 4pm.

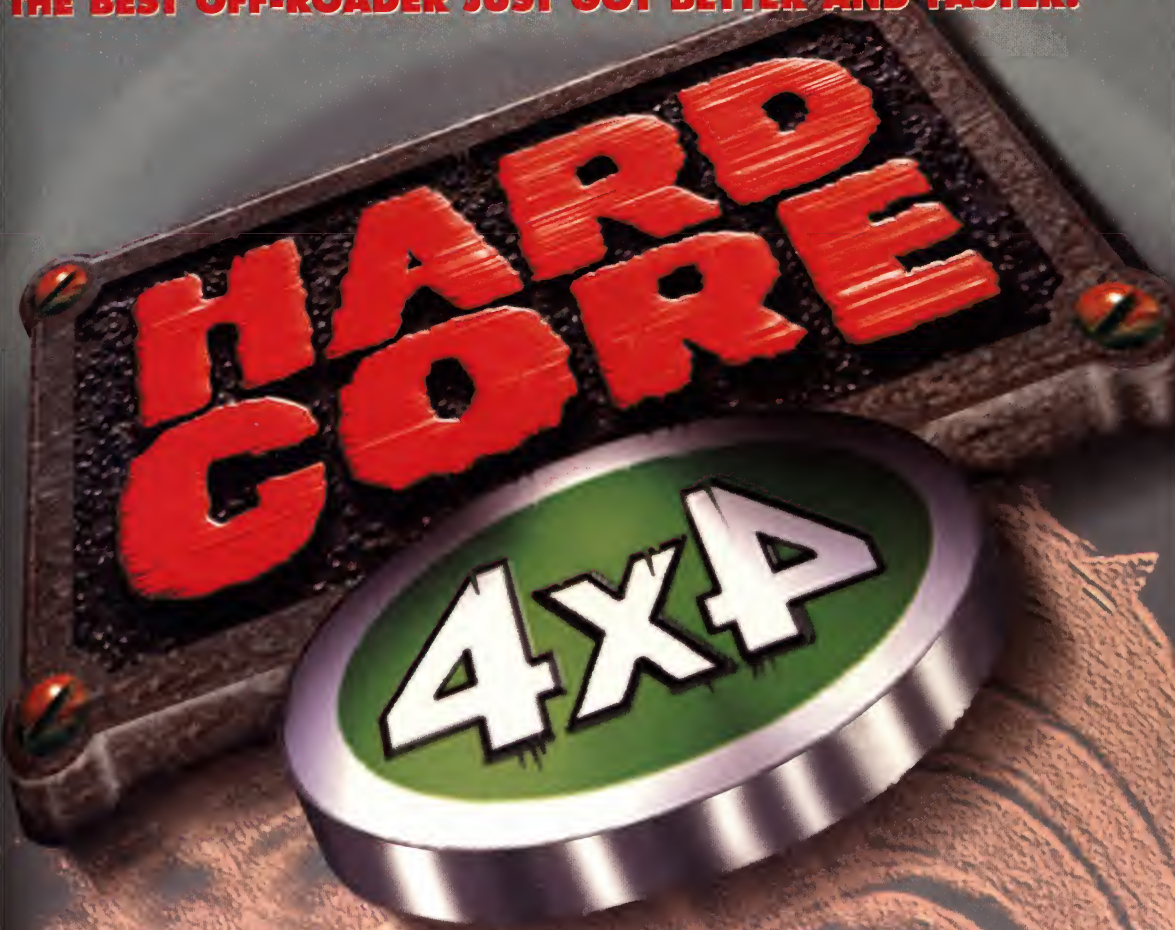
THE HOT WIRED WHITE LABEL DEMOS

TITLE	DESCRIPTION	RUNS IN	TYPE
Dark Forces	LucasArts' corking Star Wars first-person blaster	DOS	Playable demo
Sam & Max	Hilarious point-and-click adventure – a true classic	DOS	Rolling preview
Cannon Fodder 2	Comedic look at the horrors of war	DOS	Playable demo
Dawn Patrol	Knuckle-whitening dogfight orgy	DOS	Playable demo
Day Of The Tentacle	Scooby Doo meets Bill And Ted	DOS	Rolling preview
Dreamweb	Top-down sex-packed adventure game	DOS	Playable demo
Hand Of Fate	Luvverly, cartoon-like RPG	DOS	Rolling preview
Lands Of Lore	Sturdy, beard-sporting RPG	DOS	Rolling preview
Rebel Assault	Top-notch Star Wars FMV 'em up	DOS	Playable demo
Star Trek 25th Anniversary	Boldly goes where no spod has gone before	DOS	Rolling preview
TIE Fighter	Totally brilliant spacebound killathon	DOS	Playable demo
Tilt	Hot hard pinball action	DOS	Playable demo
X-Wing	See TIE Fighter	DOS	Rolling preview
Flight Unlimited	Gorgeous, serene flight simulator	Win 95	Playable demo
Lost Eden	Adventuring fun	DOS	Rolling preview
Navy Strike	Military plane madness	DOS	Playable demo
Screamer	Road-tearer-upper's delight	DOS	Playable demo
Sensible World Of Soccer	Footie action and management? You betcha	DOS	Playable demo
Terra Nova	Top wandering around in a robo-suit stuff	DOS	Playable demo



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COMPUSERVE INTERACTIVE CD-ROM

CHRIST ON A BIKE! HAVE YOU SEEN HOW MANY CDs we've bundled with this month's issue? It's like waking up and discovering you've just inherited your uncle's miniature polyurethane frisbee collection. Wonderful, wonderful stuff, eh?

Oh, where were we? Ah – the CompuServe CD, that's where. It's special offer time folks; an entire MONTH of free membership, complete with TEN hours of free on-line time. Coo. If you decide to retain your membership following the FREE trial period, it'll cost £6.50 per month (including FIVE hours of free on-line, after which each hour costs £1.95). Take up their offer and they'll even send you a free quarterly magazine and a superb 'Welcome Pack', all within ten days. Let joy be unconfined.

What's more, there's shedloads of Internetty stuff liberally sprinkled onto this special introductory CD. Aside from a downright gripping multimedia tour of the exciting on-line kingdom of Heaven (aka CompuServe), there's an unstemmable deluge of handy software such as the following...



CompuServe Access Software

This is the stuff you need to get on-line, so install this first (and remember Quentins, don't install the Mac software if you're using a PC to go on-line!).

CompuServe 3.0.3 for Windows 95 and Windows NT

CompuServe 2.6 for Windows 3.x

CompuServe 3.0 for Macintosh

Hot Dog Pro 3.0 (Windows 95)

Being a 30-day trial version of perhaps the most popular HTML editing tool out there, Hot Dog Pro is easy to use, powerful and very flexible. Which makes it sound like a rude device for sailor's bottoms. Which it isn't.

Net Attache Pro 2.1 (Windows 95/3.x)

Now here's a handy little thing – Net Attache enables you to download an entire Website quickly and easily, and then file it away for easy browsing at a later date. And not a moment too soon, say we.

Superscape - Viscap 5.0 (Windows 95)

Ooh – a 3D Web browser. Yes, prepare to be thrust headlong into a seething pit of VR dementia with this dizzying futuristic



software computer program thing. Use it to visit the following URLs and you're laughing...

● <http://www.compuserve.co.uk/vrcade/> (CompuServe's on-line shopping area which recreates Piccadilly Circus on your very own desktop!)

● <http://www.com> (Yes, you read that address correctly – it's very short)

CYBERSitter (Windows 95/3.x)

Does the thought of your kids getting their innocent little mitts on all kinds of unpleasant tawdry smut (via the Internet) fill you with nameless dread? Then try this 30-day trial version of CYBERSitter which allows you to put limits on what material can be accessed via your machine, leaving it a porn-free zone. But where's the fun in that?

WarBirds (Windows 95)

Wahey! A free FIVE-hour on-line trial of Interactive Magic's multi-player-tastic World War II dogfighting extravaganza in which literally hundreds of people can 'pull a Biggles' at once. Smart.

SandWarriors (Windows 95)

Gremlin's *Stargate*-esque 3D blaster is coming your way too. Check out this dazzling, heart-stopping interactive preview thing, mate. And then kiss me, kiss me all over. I love you. Mmmm. That's it. Oh yeah.

Oi! Check out this cool competition!

If you sign up to CompuServe by using this CD, you're entitled to enter their special on-line competition promoting the recent Hollywood unblockbuster *The Saint*. Okay, so the film might not have set the box offices alight, but the prizes on offer in this contest are great. Successfully crack the competition code and you could be driving away in a brand new Volvo C70 Coupe. Or holding a fabulous Nokia 9000 Communicator (complete with £30,000 worth of free air time) in your fist. Or wearing a pair of Bulgari watches (worth £40,000, which is enough to feed and clothe a deprived family for years) on your wrist. Or going on a special VIP holiday. Or swanning around in five grand's worth of poncey Canali clothing. Smart or what?

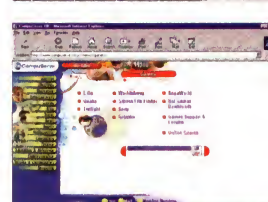
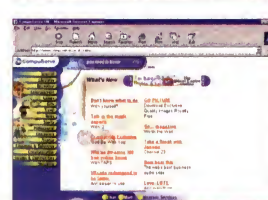
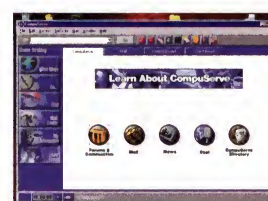
INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Insert the CompuServe CD into your CD-ROM drive.
2. From Windows Program Manager select RUN from the file menu.
(In Windows 95, let Autoplay install your CD, or click on Start then RUN.)
3. Type D:\Setup in the Command Line box and click OK (where 'D' is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).

4. Select 'Install CompuServe now' button from the 'main menu'.

5. Follow the simple on-screen instructions, making sure that you put a tick in the 'Install Signup' box when prompted. Please have your credit card or bank details to hand.

NB: In Windows 95 or Windows NT CompuServe 3.0.3 will install. In Windows 3.x, CompuServe 2.6 will install.



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BULLETIN

What's new! What it looks like! When it's out!

Godzilla game and film

Next year's sure-fire hit monster movie, *Godzilla* – currently in pre-production with *Independence Day*'s Dean Devlin (Producer)

DATA PAD

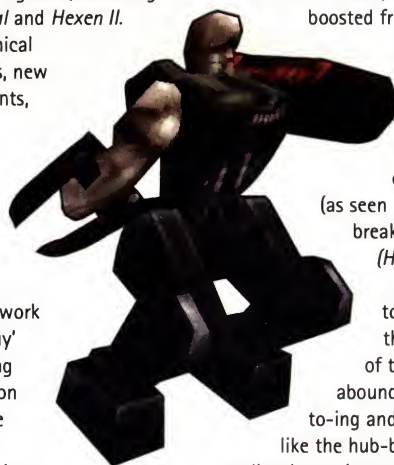
First sight of Quake II



Enhanced graphics. Hexen-style hub levels. New lighting FX. And things to blow up!

Sketched in for release in December 1997, *Quake II* looks like it may yet steal the thunder of this year's flotilla of 3D action games, including *Jedi Knight*, *Daikatana*, *Unreal* and *Hexen II*. Featuring a raft of new graphical enhancements, new monsters, new weapons and new environments, id Software are claiming, somewhat confusingly, that *Quake II* "will be more of a sequel to *Quake* than *Doom II* was to *Doom*".

Despite losing several core members such as John 'Doom' Romero, Michael 'Network Code' Abrash, and Jay 'Biz Guy' Wilbur, id have been beavering away for over seven months on the game. As a policy, id have claimed that "nothing" from *Quake* will be carried over to its



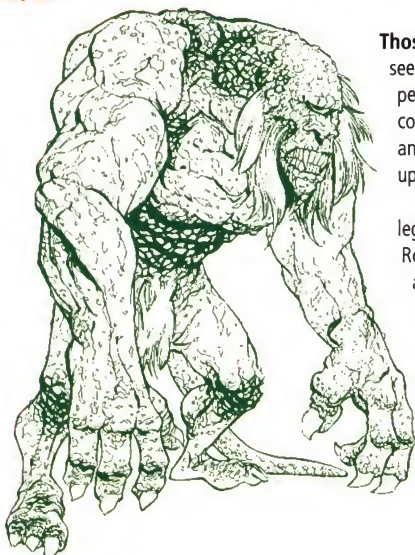
sequel – bar the engine. CodeSmith John Carmack has substantially souped it up, adding real-time shadows and exotic lighting effects which are said to rival *Unreal's* PUV™ (Pulsating-Undulating-Vomiting) technology. Also, for greater detail, the polygon count per monster has been bumped up from 150 to 500, and the animation frame rate boosted from 15 to 22 frames per second.

New colour palettes will be used on a level-by-level basis, removing the much maligned 'brownness' of the original *Quake*, while enhancements such as rotation (as seen in *Scourge Of Armagon*) and breakable objects and windows (*Hexen II*) will also be included.

Gameplay is not expected to be radically different from the Eat-Rocket-Scum 'plot' of the original, but rumours abound that *Quake II* will feature to-ing and fro-ing between levels, much like the hub-based *Hexen*, alongside dumping medieval trappings to concentrate on the more




First sight of Daikatana!

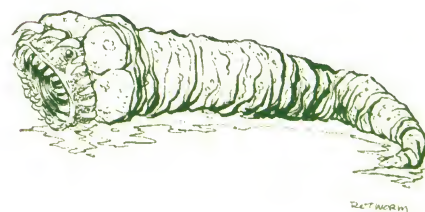


Those top boys at Ion Storm have leaked never-before-seen *Daikatana* artwork to us in a bid to stop our incessant pestering. The three visuals shown here are hand-drawn conceptals from Romero's *Daikatana* design document, and go some way to show what prospective players will be up against in the finished game.

Daikatana, the first release from Ion Storm (an already legendary development house led by *Quake* designer John Romero), is currently being dubbed as "a time-travelling action adventure with a subtle beat 'em up feel". Little has been seen of the game itself, although we do know that it does use an advanced version of the *Quake* engine.

More *Daikatana* artwork can be found in our John Romero interview on page 36, and we'll be showing the first ever screenshots in the very next issue of *PC Zone*. And we can't wait to see them... 

(Right) *Daikatana's* designers have had the builders in, and (as usual) they've left a mess behind.



and Roland Emmerich (Director) – is to be turned into a computer game by Centropolis Interactive, ready for simultaneous release with the film. Currently there are no details of

either project, but we think it's safe to assume that the game will be something other than a side-scrolling platform shoot 'em up (ah, those were the days...).

Godzilla fans should have nothing to worry about, though. The game is in safe hands at Centropolis, and – if *ID4*'s visuals are anything to go by – it'll certainly look impressive, if nothing else.

Centropolis Interactive are also working on a game called *10th Planet* alongside Bethesda Softworks, the company responsible for *Terminator: Future Shock* and the *Elder Scrolls* series.



sci-fi environments. Deathmatch-wise, *Quake II* will undoubtedly support 32 networked players, using the *QuakeWorld* system for setting up servers and clients.

Quake II will also be Windows 95 only. No word yet whether there'll be support for Direct3D, MMX and 3Dfx and other popular 3D cards built in, but we're putting our money on an affirmative "yes".

For more details check out the PC Zone Website (www.pczone.co.uk) or our favourite *Quake* place: www.stomped.com. **Z**



(Far left) *Quake II*'s 3D environments aren't radically different to those of the original. (Above) Macca's hoping they get the new 'Hairy-backed Sailor' monster in there this time...

Populous III out September

Let's not beat around the bush here. *Populous* was a great game, but after nine years it needed tweaking slightly. The sands of time and all that crap dictate that things have to move on, and so *Populous: The Third Coming* has been created to fill the deitic void that exists in so many of our lives.

In *The Third Coming* the power over your people is channelled through your Shaman. Look after her and things are cool. Spells of death, destruction and Channel 5 are rained down upon your foes. Your forces need to build living quarters, temples and spy centres but she'll take care of the day-to-day destruction – unless you decide differently. Do you assemble elite magic warriors, or scalp-hunting maniacs? The manna or the sword? Nobody said that being a god was easy, but think of the pension and all those cute angels. It does have its perks. Released on 19 September, *Populous III* is said to be an evolution rather than a mere sequel. We shall wait and see. **Z**



Duke Nukem Forever!

Who'd have thought it? *Duke Nukem* finally bows to the power of *Quake* as *Duke Nukem Forever*, the sequel to the mightily popular *Duke Nukem 3D*, is announced as the latest in a long line of licensed *Quake* engine games.

"We reviewed the *Unreal* engine and the *Quake* engine. It just made sense to go with *Quake* because it was the finished engine," said Apogee president Scott Miller. And the reason 3D Realms chose not to use their own next generation *Prey* engine in *Duke Forever*? Apparently their *Prey* technology will work only with a high-end graphic accelerator card installed, and 3D Realms don't reckon there are enough of them out there at the moment. Besides, they want *Duke Nukem Forever* on the shelves before Christmas.

Scott Miller is already convinced they've made the right decision: "The *Quake* engine is a joy to work with," he said, "and players have yet to see it used to its full potential, which we plan to exploit. As *Duke* would say: 'This is gonna rock!'"

With a whole new story, new effects, new models and weapons, *Duke Nukem Forever* has 'big hit' written all over it.

GT Interactive have snapped up worldwide PC rights (as well as full merchandising, motion picture and sequel rights) and will be showing the game to a select audience (which includes us) at the forthcoming Electronic Entertainment Expo in Atlanta in June.

For more *Duke* info check out <http://www.3drealms.com>. **Z**

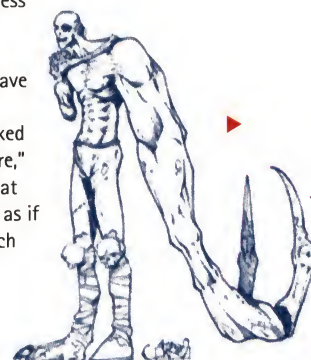
Forgive us our sins

Hipnotic Interactive, the team behind the stunning *Scourge Of Armagon* *Quake* add-on pack, have announced details of their first full game – to be published by Activision early in 1998.

Sin, as it is to be called, is set in an anarchic future where local governments have hired private security agencies to help them stem the unrelenting tide of graft, crime and drugs. You assume the role of the leader of an elite strike force paid to rid the city of rampant crime and vice proliferation, and (as you would expect) you have access to ridiculously advanced weaponry in order to do this.

Sin will feature six distinct game environments and a unique, evolving plotline which it is claimed will weave them together seamlessly.

"*Sin* adds a critical and often overlooked element to the first-person shooter genre," said Activision's Bobby Kotick, "a plot that draws the player in and makes them feel as if they've got a big secret to uncover." Which Hipnotic are promising they'll have. Sinners try three 'hail Mary's' and <http://www.hipnotic.com> for further forgiveness. **Z**

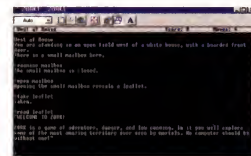


Here a Zork, there a Zork...

While all you eager little Zorkheads sit patiently waiting for *The Grand Inquisitor* to arrive, Activision are

giving you the chance to plug any holes in your back library with the *Zork Legacy Collection*. Comprising all the original Zork text adventures, *Beyond Zork*, *Zork Zero*, *Return*

To Zork and Zork Nemesis, not to mention a special Zork Encyclopaedia, it should be enough to fill all your Zork needs. Can I stop saying Zork now? (No - Ed.)



DATAPAD

Microsoft's spanky summer wardrobe

Microsoft are gearing up for a mid-summer assault on the PC games market with a number of promising announcements.



Certain to be a big hit with strategists - *Age Of Empires*.



Close Combat 2 - just look at the vastly improved graphics.

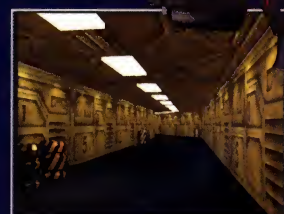
Despite several false starts, industry giants Microsoft still aren't ready to give up in the PC gaming arena. While the kinks are still being ironed out of their Internet Gaming Zone (there are still plenty of reported latency problems when connecting from the UK) and the ink is drying on the deal with LucasArts to provide on-line support for their newest titles (including *Outlaws* and *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*), the demon Gates's games division has announced several new regular titles.

Age Of Empires is a *Civilization*-style strategy game that takes the player on a dazzling trip through mankind's evolutionary stages and has been partly designed by Bruce Shelley - one half of the *Civilization* design team. *Baseball 3D* is a complex simulation of America's answer to cricket and consequently isn't going to be of interest to anyone in this country other than Channel 5's Tommy Boyd. Little is known about *Devil's Own* other than it being a *C&C*-style game that for once doesn't have the word 'Dark' in the title. *Fighter Ace* is an on-line, multi-player flight simulator with the interesting distinction of being developed in both America and Russia. *MetalTek* is a *Quake*-style actionfest with a heavy emphasis on the networking options. Finally, the man that brought the world *Tetris* has sold his soul to the devil and produced a gaggle of puzzle games for Microsoft's latest *Entertainment Pack* - *The Puzzle Collection*. Most of them have *Tetris*-style leanings, but should be varied enough to give you plenty of sleepless nights and keep the aspirin flowing.

We'll bring you more info soon, but in the meantime feel free to root around www.microsoft.com and fuel Gates's dreams of on-line world domination. Z



Microsoft's *Entertainment Pack* - even more blummin' addictive puzzle games...



MetalTek - Microsoft's first-person actioneer, out in the autumn.

Macintosh conquer the universe



The Macintosh has never really been known for its gaming facilities - *Tetris* and *Marathon* being the only notable titles. But one game that did keep Appleheads busy for quite some time a few

years ago was the space strategy game *Pax Imperia*. Now, four years on, a sequel has been announced and this time PC owners are getting a chance to see what the fuss is about.

Including 800 unique worlds to explore and colonise, 16 different races, real-time space combat and network options for up to 16 people, developers THQ and Heliotrope Studios are hoping to give established giants like *Ascendancy* and *Masters Of Orion II* a run for their galaxy-conquering money.

Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain (to give it its rather grandiose full title) is on course for a September release and we'll bring you more news in a month or two. Until then, you can whet your appetite by visiting <http://www.paximperia.com> in that freaky landscape known as cyberspace. Z



Sierra go for glory... again

With Roberta Williams currently exploring the dark side of her psyche with the *Phantasmagoria* series, Sierra's twee fantasy range has been somewhat underlooked recently. Hoping to redress the balance is the latest in the *Quest For Glory* range - *Dragon Fire*.

Featuring a fully three-dimensional world and real-time rendered characters (you can play as either a "muscle bound dude or a totally hot babe!" it says on the press information we've received), it all sounds like Sierra have been to the *Tomb Raider* school of game design for this one. Don't fret all you traditionalists out there though, it's still likely to be full of the 'classic' Sierra humour and family values. Phew. Z

You read it here first

Worth mentioning as we go to press... We hear rumblings of a *MAX 2* from Interplay, due some time in November. With new features implemented after taking into account feedback on the first game, *MAX 2* will not only have a turn-based option as before, but will also allow real-time play.

Initial copies of LucasArts' *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* have had their CD labels printed

up the wrong way round. Each game comes with two discs - a master game disc and a slave for multi-player games - but a mistake during manufacturing sent thousands of copies out with 'Game' discs labelled 'Multi-player', and vice versa. Doh!

MicroProse are to carry on where Activision left off with the *MechWarrior* series, announcing *MechWarrior III*, and *MechCommander* for

release before the end of the year - so big robots galore there - and *Accolade* are working on a follow-up to last year's excellent (but underrated) real-time resource management space game *Deadlock*, which will contain a map editor, loads of new units and over 40 structured missions. Look out for further details of all these games in a forthcoming issue of *PC Zone*. Z



The most horrific and darkly humorous use of the advanced build engine... the most brutal and addictive multi-player action... the most innovative game with more weapons, more locations, more enemies...

Includes the Blood Map Editor for creating Deathmatch and Single Player maps.



"Blood represents the very latest in Duke Nukem-style technology." PC Zone

"Spawn of Duke Nukem, Eidos' Blood promises to make our gameplay cup runneth over." PC Gamer

Blood has generated over 450,000 downloads since its on-line release 7/3/97
www.blood.com



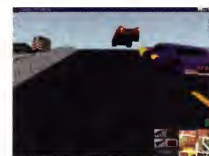
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Streets paved with gold

Not content with just sticking you in a helicopter, Maxis now want you to drive around your virtual cities in *Streets Of Sim*

City, to be released late this summer. Drive through over 50 pre-built cities or satisfy your egocentric cravings by racing through those you've designed yourself. It's got guns, it's got rival cars and it's got

breadtrucks. Yes, you read that right. Virtual citizens do have to eat after all. *Sim City 3000* is not due out for a while, so this'll be a welcome stop gap for fans of the series.



DATA PAD

Ghost rider motorcycle he-ee-ro

Sega's Saturn blockbuster, *Manx TT*, will appear on the PC - hip hip hooray!

Manx TT, the new superbike ditty from Psygnosis, is scheduled to worm its way into your software collection in early autumn. Taking the name of one of the world's most famous (and dangerous) bike challenges you're offered a choice of four courses to race around on, with the goal being to master these and gain entry into the superbike race. Here you have the chance to ride an assortment of hard-as-nails superbikes as well as an, erm, not-so-hard sheep. Yes, it's strange I know, but get that gear change right and you'll have earned yourself a romp around the Isle of Wight with Larry the Lamb on steroids. A time trial mode is also in there (useful for getting the necessary miles under the joystick) as well as a 'ghost rider' option whereby you get to race against your best time trial bike. With support for up to eight players, Direct3D and 3Dfx native, *Manx TT* could well be the game that *Moto Racer* should have been but wasn't. **Z**



Nightmare scenario

Flying Nightmares 2 is a combat simulation from Eidos Interactive that promises something different from the norm.

While it is possible to fly both the AV-8B Harrier II and the AH-1W SuperCobra in missions over Cuba, there is also the opportunity to give all that flying malarkey a miss and instead concentrate on ordering up to 16 players around like a newly elected Labour leader. Taking on the role of team commandant, it's up to you to co-ordinate missions between Harriers, Cobras, computer-controlled M1-A1 tanks, combat engineers, infantry companies and more. As the game progresses you can issue updated orders and new objectives to individual players. With a Win 95 engine supporting MMX chips, Direct 3D, 16-bit colour and support for 3Dfx cards plus an Internet gaming ladder, *Flying Nightmares 2* looks like it could turn out to be something of a dream for those of you bored by run-of-the-mill flight sims.



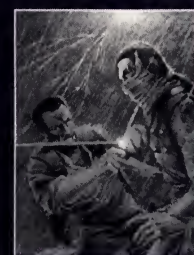
Http://www.eidosinteractive.com for more nightmarish info. **Z**

Issued by the Tamriel tourist board

BETHESDA HAVE ANNOUNCED TWO NEW ACTION ADVENTURE games, both of which are set to take the *Elder Scrolls'* world of Tamriel some stage further in development.

Battlespire is a new fantasy action game with simplified character building and detailed 3D graphics. Although details are sketchy at the moment, it does seem that the game's designers are putting all the emphasis on the action, as the player takes on the evil hordes of the Daedra Prince Mehrunes Dragon.

Redguard is the second Tamriel-based game due from Bethesda before the end of the year. It will be the first adventure game from the Rockville-based developers, and promises to be more than your average point-and-clicker. Viewed from the third person, *Redguard* utilises the latest version of Bethesda's Xnige technology and will feature fractal landscapes, real-time lighting and realistic weather conditions. **Z**



Excalibur on PC



While *Tomb Raider* was setting fire to every PC owners' underwear last year, PlayStation owners had their own 'nubile young heroine running around caverns in 3D' game to keep them happy. Now *Excalibur 2555AD* is coming to the PC and it's looking pretty smart indeed. Compatible with just about every 3D accelerator card around

and running in resolutions up to 1024x768, it tells the tale of Merlin's young assistant and her journey to a futuristic world in order to reclaim the legendary sword of King Arthur, stolen by time-travelling raiders.

With a richly detailed world to explore, *Excalibur* requires the player to rely not just on his or her sword arm but also their diplomatic skills as they encounter all manner of characters along the way. Telstar are hoping to have the game ready by the end of August and rumours that the only thing delaying their progress is the battle to get the rights to Monty Python's *Knight Of The Round Table* song are as yet unfounded.

Http://www.telstar.co.uk for further details. **Z**



Excalibur 2555AD did well on the PlayStation. Will it repeat that success on PC?

"THE BEST WW1 FLIGHT SIM EVER"

PC ZONE 92%

"COMPELLING, BEAUTIFUL, ADDICTIVE TERRIFYING. AN ASTOUNDING SIM"

PC GAMER 92%

"GREAT FLIGHT MODELS, GRAPHICS AND HISTORICAL ACCURACY"

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

"FLYING CORPS IS FANTASTIC"

PC FORMAT 90%



WHO ELSE COULD MAKE
FLIGHT SIMULATION SO REAL

empire
INTERACTIVE

Ready, Replay, Go!

May Day bank holiday saw the launch of GT Interactive's new budget label, Replay, to rapturous applause.

According to GT all six titles in the new Replay range have been flying off the shelves up and down the country, which is hardly surprising when you consider that the titles are

Heretic, Doom, Doom II, Mortal Kombat 3, Flight Of The Amazon Queen and Williams Arcade Classics, and that the most you have to pay for them is £19.99.



DATA PAD

HOT Line

Tracking the hottest games and their current release dates

T I M E L I N E

JUNE

X-COM 3 (MicroProse)
Jedi Knight (LucasArts)

JULY

Hexen 2 (Activision)
Monkey Island 3 (LucasArts)
Starcraft (Sierra)

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

SimCity 3000 (Maxis)

OCTOBER

Quake II (id)
Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)
Ultima IX (EA)
Unreal (GT Interactive)

NOVEMBER

Populous 3 (EA)
Rally 2 (Europress)
Daikatana (EIDOS Interactive)
Tomb Raider 2 (Core Design)

DECEMBER

JANUARY '98

Star Trek: First Contact (MicroProse)

FEBRUARY '98

FIGP3 (TBC)

MARCH '98

The X-Files (Fox Interactive)

Roger Dean working on Black Onyx

Forget point-and-click adventure games. *Black Onyx*, a new adventure from Blue Planet, uses a novel interface that is built around on-screen 'cards', similar to those found in *Magic: The Gathering*. If you want to talk to someone, all you need to do is play the talk card. Similarly, to buy something the



You can keep your *Asia* and *Yes* album covers. We want better!

buy card is brought into the frame. If you think that this sounds interesting, well the combat element of the game is something else. The Russian company Animatek International, founded by

Tetris creator Alexey Scratchmyars, has constructed the animation engine called 'Caviar' (gack!). Capable of turning extremely complicated polygon-based figures into objects made of Voxels, the results are highly detailed, smoothly animated characters that don't require an ultra high-end PC to run. The combat has been choreographed by a leading Kendo master while the background and conceptual artwork have been designed by Roger Dean (*Asia* and *Yes* album covers), so this Christmas 1997 release could offer up a very tasty little slice of fantasy role-playing. **Z**

It's grimm oop north

Strategy fans should be getting moist at the thought of playing *Wisdom Of Kings*, an eight-player, real-time strategy game from the rather strangely monickered GrimmWare. Taking place in the distant future after the Earth has been ravaged by a nuclear catastrophe, players begin with a single encampment and must build and explore while managing their resources. Grimmware have developed a proprietary 3D engine called Genesis that can render landscapes and 3D structures at a real-time speed in excess of anything already out there. They also claim advanced computer AI and full customisation of things like graphics, unit and structure characteristics and default AI patterns. If all this sounds too good to be true, then bear this in mind - the MINIMUM processor needed to play *Wisdom Of Kings* is a P166. Maybe it's time to take up that second paper round? **Z**

Mindscape-a-go-go

So many new Mindscape titles to talk about, but so little space...

So let's get straight into it. *Panzer General II* is due out in October and is currently slated asSSI's biggest title this year. *PGII*'s development team have listened to suggestions from *PG* players and have come up with a less 'hardcore' sequel, with beautiful hand-painted isometric maps and more tactical gameplay than before. This time there'll be 36 preset WWII scenarios to act out, as well



Pretend you're the new new Labour government in *Imperialism*.

as a built-in scenario editor and multi-player options for up to four people, over serial, modem, Internet and e-mail. *Imperialism*, out in July, is a sort of cross between *Civilization* and *Risk* - a turn-based political/economic sim set in the early 1800s where the general idea is to build up your military and invade other territories for dominance of the world. Megalomaniacs take note.

Out in July, and already looking very good indeed, is *World Cup Basketball* - Mindscape's entry into the sport genre, complete with motion-captured players and sneaker squeaks when the players run.

When *Pacific General* is released in July, strategy gamers will find the same game engine running the show that was used to great effect in the original

Panzer General, plus 36 scenarios, two campaigns and Jazz 'period' music (which we heard and thought was awful...).

Later in the year Mindscape will also be releasing a strategy-based RPG set in the Caribbean, called *Buccaneer*. Developed by Divide by Zero, the people behind the *Great Naval Battles* series, *Buccaneer* portrays the life of a high seas pirate in full 3D using fast polygon graphics.

Finally, there's news of a sequel to the surprise hit *War Wind* - tentatively titled *War Wind 2*. On course for November, *War Wind 2* now includes (at the request of fans of the original) human characters and an improved game engine to simplify certain elements of the gameplay.

If you're gagging for more information about some of the aforementioned titles, you'll find it at <http://www.mindscape.com>. **Z**



Wargamers will definitely chuck their muck when they catch sight of the new, biologically improved graphics in *Panzer General II*.

Here
chicky
chicky...



On yer bike!

Take a young motorcycle ace called Jamie Robinson, add a dash of C&C, mix with a sprinkling of 250cc race-prepared madness

and wait until 200 million people get an eye-ful of your game logo. Virgin Interactive Entertainment have splattered the C&C logo over Mr Robinson's bike in the hope that it'll help him become the 1997 World 250cc Grand Prix

Motorcycle Champion, while also increasing the sales of said game. Unfortunately, Jamie broke his foot in the last race which must piss VIE off nearly as much as Jamie himself. Perhaps R&R is a better idea than C&C at the moment, guys?

DATA PAD

Off the cushion



Mirage have a new pool game coming out in September, and they're already saying it'll be better than any of the other pool games currently available.

Entitled *Ricochette* (sic), Mirage's slant on this skilful sport has been put together with a physics model conceived by three Tefal-style maths bods, and a brand new 3D engine which has been developed in-house.

Keen to stress that *Ricochette* is more than just a simple pool simulator, Mirage tell us there will also be a number of different computer opponents to take on – each with individual AI traits and characteristics – so players can learn their bad habits and employ strategies to beat them. The usual multi-player options will also be available. **Z**

X-Rated



The X-Men are extremely popular Marvel comicbook characters, and it came as no surprise when they made the transition to arcade game and PlayStation title. Now *X-Men: Children Of The Atom* is set to launch on the PC – and will probably be out by the time you read this.



In a nutshell, you play the X-Men whose only goal in life is to kick the living bejesus out of the Acolytes (the enemy) and the Sentinels (also the enemy). It's a *SFII* type affair, which probably means that you're almost certainly gonna get scabby thumbs from trying to suss out all the special moves. Still, it's probably preferable to having scabby palms... **Z**

Disco 2000

At the stroke of midnight on 31 December 1999, your PC will feel like someone's forced a bottle of Cognac down its silicon throat and run off with its wife. The new millennium may be the excuse we need for a piss up to end all piss ups, but the built-in BIOS clock on a PC will probably give up the ghost and reset itself back to 0000, or – perhaps even worse – to sometime in the mid-'80s.

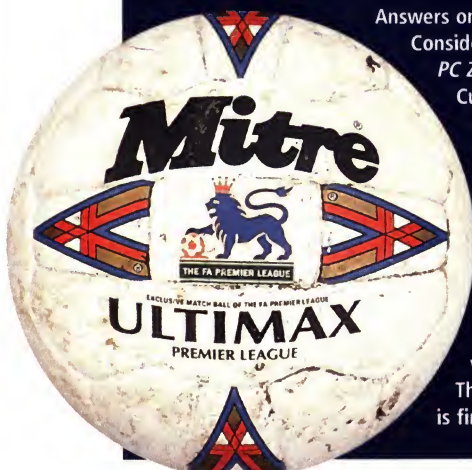
So what can you do about it? Euromax, the joystick people, have a gizmo called the *Millennium Buster* that, for the paltry sum of £29.99, promises to 'fix' the BIOS and make the leap into the year 2000 a lot less painful. Give Euromax a call on 01262 601006 and have a chat with them if you want to know more. **Z**

Win!
Footballs and copies
of Kick Off 97!

Spot the ball

The football season may have drawn to a close, but PC gamers can re-live those favourite Premiership moments in Maxis' *Kick Off 97* by winning themselves a copy of the game in our very own Spot the Ball competition. Not only that, but ten lucky winners will also walk off with a Mitre Ultimax Premier League football – an awesome piece of kickable leather in itself. Combined, they're a budding footballer's dream!

Take a look at the *Kick Off 97* scene pictured right, and tell us where you think the ball is. It's that simple. Ten correct entries pulled out of the *PC Zone* sack of magic win a football and a copy of the game.



Answers on a postcard to:
Consider It Spotted,
PC Zone, CPCZ77B,
Customer Interface,
Bradley Pavilions,
Bradley Stoke
North, Bristol
BS12 0BQ.

Rules: All entries
to be received
by 20 July 1997.
No correspondence
will be entered into.
The editor's decision
is final. **Z**



KEEPER'S HERE.

dungeon KEEPER



YOU'RE ONLY DOING
GOOD, WHEN YOU'RE
BEING BAD.

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PC CD-ROM
www.bullfrog.co.uk



Even better than the real thing

Top *Tomb Raider* babe Lara Croft is set to appear on tour with U2 this summer, as part of their Pop Mart audio visual extravaganza.

Specially designed footage of the luscious Lara, in her native 3D environment, has already been used on the giant video screens during the US leg of the band's tour. So far, the reaction is said to have

been "spectacular", which is fuelling speculation that Lara's role may even be expanded for the European leg of the tour. We think it's a jolly good idea and can but drool in anticipation...



DATA PAD



Actua Soccer 2 for Christmas

Gremlin Interactive have just confirmed that they are currently working on the sequel to the ground-breaking *Actua Soccer*, to be released in time for Christmas.



Actua Soccer 2 will use

a new and improved 3D engine, benefit from a completely reworked AI and will sport instantly recognisable players thanks to new, detailed hi-res graphics.

Players will be able to opt to play as any one of the 92 teams that make up the English Football League and play league, tournament and friendly matches at every stadium in the Premier League and a few more besides, and there's even going to be a practice ground where players will be able to hone their ball skills. Further enhancements include a full range of weather conditions (from balmy southern sunshine to northern sleet and snow) and the option to play at night on a floodlit pitch.

As well as new motion-captured moves, the promise of an even more instinctive control system and fully up to date teams, *Actua Soccer 2* will feature what Gremlin are calling 'Ambient Realism', whereby every sound in the game is context-sensitive, from the roar of the crowd to the in-game commentary by Barry

Exclusive new shots of Gremlin's latest incarnation of *Actua Soccer*.

Davies, who's recorded over 30,000 samples for the title, and will be contributing a few thousand more.

Due for release in June is *Actua Golf*. Using a very different 3D engine from the original PlayStation release, it sports shimmering water reflections, windswept leafy trees and shrubbery, a newly motion-captured player model and a commentary by Peter Allis and Alex Hay. We were so impressed with the level of detail and smoothness of the 'True 3D - go anywhere' engine that we begged Gremlin to at least consider using it for an RPG (they said they'd let us know).

As you'd expect, *Actua Golf* will feature famous courses and holes, as well as a driving range and putting green to help you practise your swing.

Come the summer we can also expect to see *Actua Tennis*. Not surprisingly, it uses the latest motion capture technology and is the first release to use the new *Actua Sports* 3D engine that allows the player to view the action from any angle, during play and replays. A full range of playing options, including Pro and Amateur tournaments and tours, singles and doubles (including mixed) will be on offer, and thanks to an intelligent player control system, players will be able to vary the amount of control they have over their character's movement and swing.

Gremlin maintain that they're on the brink of signing two 'big name' celebrity commentators to provide the match commentary and that their motion-captured umpires, line judges and ballboys and players are the most realistic ever seen in a tennis game. A look at some early code has considerably whetted *Zone's* appetite, and as long as Gremlin can get it to play as well as it looks, the wait for a decent tennis game on the PC could be over.

Finally, there's *Actua Ice Hockey* which is due for release at the end of the year. If you're a *Blue Peter* fan you may have seen presenter Romana D'Annunzio slip-sliding about the ice with Sheffield Steelers' Chris Kelland and Peiro Greco on TV last month as they followed Gremlin putting two of the league's finest players



(Above) "I'm not playing anymore!" (Left) *Actua Golf*.



(Above right) Motion capturing ice hockey players. (Above) Alien ship lands during ice hockey game!

Shadow Warrior

The creators of DUKE NUKEM are back. Bigger. Better. Berserker. Shadow Warrior is coming to the belly of the East spreading ninja charisma like napalm. Undead sumos must be uized. Satanic samurai must be shurikenned. Bulldozers must be boarded. Freaks must be flattened. Geishas must be goosed. Enemies must be disemboweled and gore weapons must be gotten.

Enter the world's most advanced 3-D environment... and make yourself some sushi.



FRESH FROM THE CREATORS OF **DUKE NUKEM 3D™** COMES A BLOODY BARREL OF FUN



This one's a no-brainer.



4 barrel rampage in
rooms-over-rooms.



Tanks. Joyride 'em or trash 'em!



Sticky situations call for
sticky bombs.



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DATA PAD

Digital Anvil sign to Microsoft

Chris Roberts, he of *Wing Commander* and 'interactive' movie fame, has left Origin and partnered with Microsoft to form his own development company, Digital Anvil. Microsoft, which

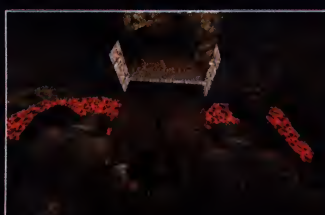
holds an equity interest in the company, will publish Digital Anvil's first three games worldwide late next year. As well as Roberts, DA's other talents include Erin Roberts (brother of Chris and ex-Origin), Tony Zurovec (another Origin veteran), John Miles (who engineered the graphics technology in the



You reckon you're the best PC gamesplayer in the land? Then come and test your mettle in the 1997 *Official PC Zone UK Games Championship*. The event, being held over the summer months at a number of key Internet cafés across the land, will see registered combatants going head-to-head within six different games in a bid to reach an explosive final on the 24 August 1997.

**BECOME A
PC Gaming
Champion
AND WIN BIG
PRIZES!**

THE GAMES CATEGORIES



SHOOT 'EM UP:
Quake: The Scourge Of Armagon



FLIGHT SIM:
EF2000



SPORT:
Actua Soccer Club Edition



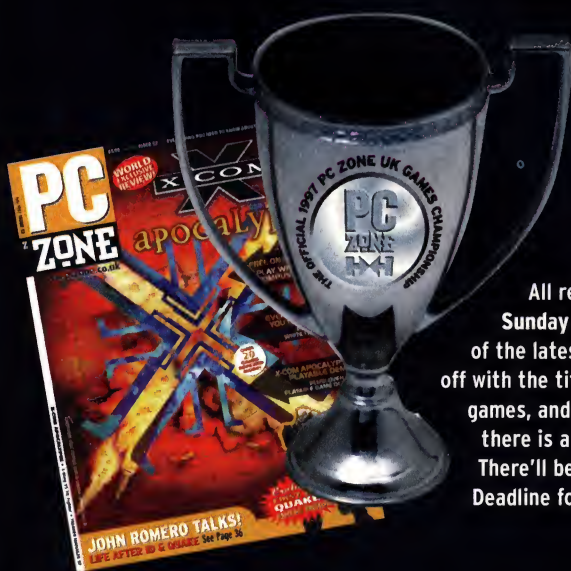
BOARD GAME:
Risk



RACING:
Network Q RAC Rally Championship



COMBAT STRATEGY:
C&C: Red Alert



"Big money! Big prizes! I love it!"

All regional winners will be treated to an all-expenses paid trip to the final which will take place on Sunday 24 August 1997 at Shoot 'n' Surf, London WC1. Not only that, but they will also receive £500 worth of the latest PC games, a specially designed trophy, and a subscription to *PC Zone*. The overall winner will walk off with the title (enough in itself), a state of the art Compaq MMX PC worth two grand, a big trophy, even more games, and a kiss from every member of the *PC Zone* (subject to whether they're a girl, or not). So you can see there is a heck of a lot to play for.

There'll be all kinds of other freebies up for grabs on the day - check your venue for details. Deadline for entries is 11 July 1997, so get those forms in quickly!

Wing Commander series) and film director Robert Rodriguez (*Desperado* and *From Dusk 'Til Dawn*). Says Roberts: "I wanted to create an environment where we have small, focused teams producing two or three projects a year. The idea is to attract and keep the top talent in the industry." And what of the link

up with the mighty Microsoft? "From my selfish perspective as an artist you want a publisher with a lot of padding. Basically, they have more padding than anyone else!" Quite, Chris. Roberts hopes to attract top class designers to his company by setting up a small, laid-back development environment, and

that Digital Anvil developers will not feel the same corporate and commercial pressures he claims he was subjected to at Origin. "The idea is to attract and keep the best talent in the industry," proclaims Roberts. So get those CVs in quickly... [Http://www.digitalanvil.com](http://www.digitalanvil.com) for more information.

THE VENUES



THE SOUTH EAST (AND FINAL)

Shoot 'n Surf
13 New Oxford Street
London WC1A 1BA
Web: <http://www.shootnsurf.co.uk>
e-mail: pczone@shootnsurf.co.uk
Tel: 0171 419 1183



THE SOUTH WEST

Internet Express
1b Exeter Central Station
Queen Street, Exeter EX4 3SB
Web: <http://www.inxpress.co.uk>
e-mail: pczone@mail.inxpress.co.uk
Tel: 01392 201544



THE MIDLANDS

Cyberpub
5 Victoria Centre
21 Lower Parliament Street
Nottingham NG1 3DB
e-mail: ntm00001@cyberpub.adr.co.uk
Tel: 0115 947 5394



THE NORTH EAST

Punter's Cybercafe
111 Arundel Street
Sheffield S1 2NT
Web: <http://www.punters.co.uk>
e-mail: pczone@punters.co.uk
Tel: 0114 276 2668



THE NORTH WEST

Cyberia
12 Oxford Street
Manchester M1 5AN
Web: <http://www.easynet.co.uk/cybian/>
e-mail: pczone@easynet.co.uk
Tel: 0161 950 2233



SCOTLAND

Reality-X
54 Broughton Street
Edinburgh EH1 3SA
Web: <http://www.reality-x.co.uk>
e-mail: pczone@reality-x.co.uk
Tel: 0131 478 7099



IRELAND

The Internet Exchange
Drury Hall, Lower Stephen Street
Dublin D2
Web: <http://www.intex.ie/cafe.html>
e-mail: pczone@intex.ie
Tel: 353 1 4758788



WALES

The Cardiff Cybercafe Ltd
9 Duke Street
Cardiff CF1 2AY
Web: <http://www.cardiffcybercafe.co.uk>
e-mail: pczone@cardiffcybercafe.co.uk
Tel: 01222 235757

PC ZONE UK GAMES CHAMPIONSHIP REGISTRATION FORM:

Please fill in this registration form, and send or take it to your chosen venue.

Name:

Address:

Postcode: Tel:

Fax (if applicable): E-mail (if applicable):

Alias: Age: Sex:

Occupation: Favourite game:

Computer at home (circle one): None 486- Pentium+

Do you have Internet access at home (circle one): Yes No

Chosen venue:

Please tick here if you do not want to receive further information about other special offers from your chosen venue. ☐

Contact chosen venue for current charge rates. Contact **only** your chosen venue for information.



5D sign to GT

5D Games, the Massachusetts-based development group founded by ex-Papyrus game designers, have signed their first

four games to GT Interactive. The first of these – their networkable 3D space combat simulation *Millennium Four: The Right* – should see the light of day before the end of the year.

Millennium Four: The Right will use 5D Games' proprietary graphics engine and will be completely open-ended. Every situation and outcome will be up to the player and there will be no scripted universal storyline as such.



DATA PRO

THE MAN WHO KNOWS



Good morning ladies and gentlemen, this is your senior conductor speaking. Welcome to this industry-related information service from *PC Zone*, calling at gossip, chatter, hearsay and banter, with an optional request stop at slander. The buffet is situated towards the rear, where we will be serving snacks, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. I hope you have a pleasant journey.

Theme Hospital has recently provoked national press coverage due to the decision of a leading health care consultancy, **Sector**, to use it as a challenge for **NHS** trainees. Various health representatives have felt moved to speak out, with the game in turn being branded "sick", "tasteless", "realistic" and "a bit of fun". The majority of spokespersons appear to have missed the point completely though, which is – what the hell are trainees doing playing kids' games when they should be working? I am only grateful that I don't have to use the National Health Service, due to the fact that I'm a supernatural being who never gets ill.

Rumour control was sent into minor confusion earlier this month with the whisper that **LucasArts** had been trying to acquire **Interactive Magic**. The alleged deal has been denied by **I-Magic** and is unlikely to ever happen. Incidentally, on the subject of magic, could **Paul Daniels** please leave the country.

Back to the enduringly autonomous **Interactive Magic**, their Vice-President of Engineering and Technology, **Doug Kubel**, was present at the unveiling of the **F22 Raptor** stealth fighter, and had this to say: "Seeing the actual F22 Raptor and having the opportunity to learn more about this incredible aircraft will help our design team fine tune our *F22 Raptor* simulation." Also in evidence at this star-studded 'looking at an aeroplane' event were **NovaLogic**, whose president **John Garcia** remarked: "This is another step forward in our commitment to develop the most realistic military flight simulations. While our competitors are still struggling to release their first game based on the F22, **NovaLogic** is well on its way to deliver a second generation simulation destined to dominate the skies and the competition." The fool. That's fighting talk where I come from, although where were fellow F22 progenitors **MicroProse**, **DI** and **DI2**? I certainly didn't see them, although I did spend the latter stages rolling around on a pile of coats with a common prostitute and a flagon of methylated spirit.

In further real life/death/games crossover madness, America's **Department Of Defence** has gone and teamed up with **MAK Technologies** to jointly develop a game to be used for training purposes by **The Marines**, who have previously used **Doom** and other games to simulate military engagements. **MEU-31** stands for Marine Expeditionary Unit 31, and is the tentative title of the game, which will be commercially available. **Warren Katz** of **MAK** stated: "This represents a major step for the Department Of Defence in that they are recognising the benefits of collaborating with a commercial video game publisher from the beginning of the game design process. This will result in a video game which is much more realistic than any other game ever produced for this genre." A bold claim indeed, although the Department are investing \$800,000 in the project. The results should be seen in 1999, by which time Earth will have a moon base and the artist formerly known as Prince will be partying like it's tonight.

A man with a funny name has got a new job. **Brett Sperry** of **Westwood Studios** has taken charge of **Virgin Interactive Entertainment's** publishing program and has already cancelled one project, an arcade racing game by the name of **Propaganda**. Despite his new responsibilities, Sperry will remain in Las Vegas as president of **Westwood**, overseeing, among other projects, the **Command & Conquer** sequels. There are also rumours of a **C&C movie**. As Sperry explains, "That idea's been kicked around, though who knows whether it will actually reach the big screen, because putting a movie together and actually getting it shot takes a lot of time and effort." Not necessarily, an old Super 8 camera and a couple of local wenches usually does the trick for me.

This column has now terminated. When leaving, please be sure to take all personal belongings and effects. Thank you for travelling with **TWIK**.

Frog Chorus



After wandering into the forest to collect a few frogs for lunch, you stumble across a horse skeleton and a rusty suit of armour. Suddenly, it all comes back to you in vivid cliché-o-rama™. Your name is **Biatec** and you were a knight on a mission to find and destroy the evil angel **Samael**, who wants to enslave the whole world. Unfortunately your horse fell into the swamp and died, while you fell and cracked your head on a rock, which gave you a serious case of amnesia. But now you've regained your memory, your mission is back on the cards. Hurrah! *Tlön* is an adventure game that uses high-colour SVGA graphics, a multitude of interactive characters and incorporates elements of role-playing, **D&D** and adventure games into one cute and cuddly game. Expect to see it sometime in the Autumn. **Z**

Uniform Papa November



Saving the solar system from invading aliens: **UPN**.

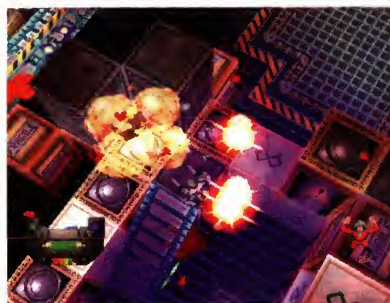
Simis have released details of their forthcoming space combat game **UPN**, which they are developing for **Grolier Interactive**.

Scheduled for an Autumn release, **UPN** (which stands for *United Planetary Nations*) casts the player as a sort of futuristic bobby policing the solar system on the lookout for wrong-doers. But when life as we know it is threatened by an unknown race of hostile aliens, it's on with the cape and into the fray.

Graphically, **UPN** appears somewhat similar to **EIDOS' Terricide** (which also happens to have been developed by **Simis**), and as such, could turn out to be something of a blast. We shall find out very soon. **Z**

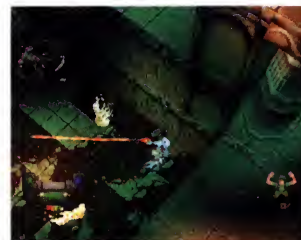
Hunter Killer

It's the 21st century and mankind has again picked up the shitty end of the future stick. Droids have become the norm for the day-to-day tasks usually carried out by humans, and a virus has infected the mechanoids' semi-organic brains and caused them to turn on their masters. It's spreading rapidly through the 25 zones of the colony and is in danger of reaching



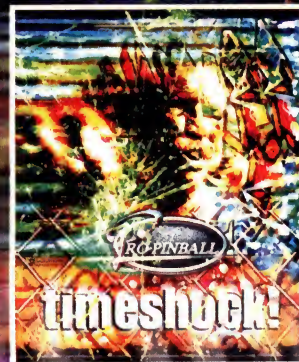
Earth. Fortunately an antidote has been found that allows you to transfer into and control different droids, so it's off to shootsville in *Machine Hunter* – a top-down, 3D blast fest from **EIDOS** that also includes strategy and rescue elements.

To be released in June with a multitude of different weapons, millions (well, ten) different droids and an eight-player deathmatch mode, it could be something quite special. Then again it could all go the way of the fruit. **Z**



YOU CAN SEE IT! YOU CAN HEAR IT! YOU CAN FEEL IT!

empire
INTERACTIVE



BUT CAN YOU HANDLE IT?

..... Steel yourself for the assault of total vision and sound that is Pro Pinball - Timeshock! It's the fastest most colourful Silicon Graphics game you've ever experienced. And the most alive, with layer upon layer of fiendish challenges through four different time zones, zooming out at you in gleaming 3-D. Forget the days when you had to scroll pinball games up and down.. Forget two-dimensional graphics. With a full 3-D pinball table in a single screen and shockingly detailed graphics and special effects Pro Pinball - Timeshock! is the only pinball game that's ready to take on the real thing.....And beat it!

timeshock!



PRO PINBALL - TIMESHOCK! AVAILABLE NOW ON PC CD-ROM.



ACTUAL TABLE SHOTS

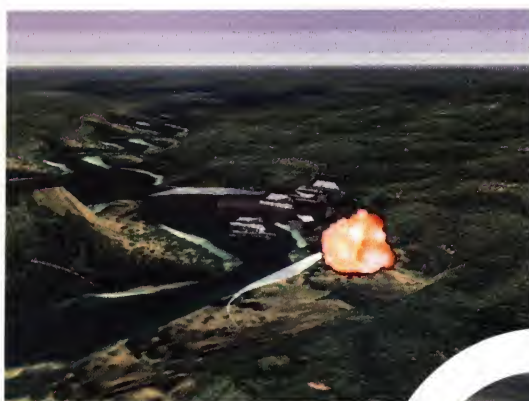
EMPIRE INTERACTIVE. TEL. NO: 0181 343 9143. WEBSITE: <http://www.empire.co.uk>

HOT Shots

Falcon 4.0 (MicroProse)

Prepare to be bowled over by the most amazing flight sim you're ever likely to see... well, if these shots are anything to go by we'll be picking our jaws off the floor when MicroProse's *Falcon 4.0* hits our screens in October.

Falcon 4.0 will be Win 95 only – set in the Korean peninsula among a real-time war environment. As an F-16 fighter pilot, the player will enact highly realistic missions over some of the most impressive scenery ever created for a game of this type. Sadly, there's simply not enough room to go into detail here, so watch out for a full preview of this hot new title in a forthcoming issue of *PC Zone*.



A super bumper summer holiday collection of Hot Shots this month – three pages worth. We've got new *Falcon 4.0* shots, a smattering of *Beasts & Bumpkins*, and some smart never-before-seen *Full Metal Pigeon* artwork for your visual pleasure. Don't forget to turn the page for even more Hot Shots ya'll!

Beasts & Bumpkins (Electronic Arts)

Looking like something of a cross between *Theme Park* and *Ultima VIII*, Electronic Arts' *Beasts & Bumpkins* first caught our eye way back in issue 50. Now approaching release, this olde worlde *Sim City/Farm/Town* variant promises much merriment and mirth as your wenches are abducted by monsters and your cattle explode with disease. Impressive cut-scenes and highly varied graphics have been promised in over 30 preset missions, and if these shots are anything to go by, we're in for a treat.



Full Metal Pigeon (SCI)

The weird and wacky world of SCI's *Full Metal Pigeon* mixes high-octane blasting action with WWI technology, doused with a liberal helping of humour and modelled in full 3D. Based loosely around *SWIV 3D* technology (but obviously greatly enhanced), you'll be able to take on *Full Metal Pigeon* in single-player, split-screen and network mode. The game is currently shaping into form nicely – as you can see from these exclusive in-game screenshots – and SCI promise there'll be far more to see come the autumn when the game is released. We'll keep you posted with further updates as we get them.



HOT Shots



Myth: The Fallen Lords (Bungie)

More blood-drenched scenes from Bungie's *Myth* – still without a publisher in the UK, although we're bound to have news on developments next issue.

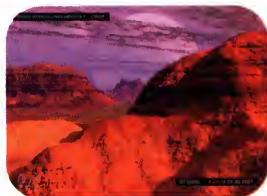
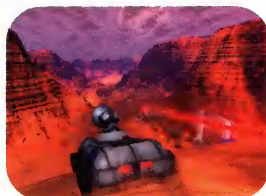
In a nutshell, *Myth: The Fallen Lords* is a tactical level game of fantasy warfare. In either single-player or network games, the player will direct a group of units (ranging from a handful to hundreds) on a battlefield as they manoeuvre, take and break formations and clash with the enemy in a bloody combat of melee, projectiles and magic. Expect limbs, eyeballs and fountains of blood to bounce and pour in a realistic fashion, due to advanced physics modelling on Bungie's part. Definitely not one for the squeamish among us.



Outpost 2: Divided Destiny (Sierra On-line)

The sequel to the beautiful (but flawed) space strategy epic *Outpost*, *Outpost 2: Divided Destiny* will this time combine science fiction strategy with real-time gameplay in an effort to oust the 'high boredom' element that sadly plagued the original.

Players will take on the role of the leader of the original colony, Eden, or the rebellious splinter colony, Plymouth, and must manage and build an expanding colonial empire while fighting off a deadly alien attack force. Currently everything's looking sweet on the visuals front, but Sierra tell us there's still much work to be done before *Outpost 2* is released at the end of the year, so watch out for further updates.



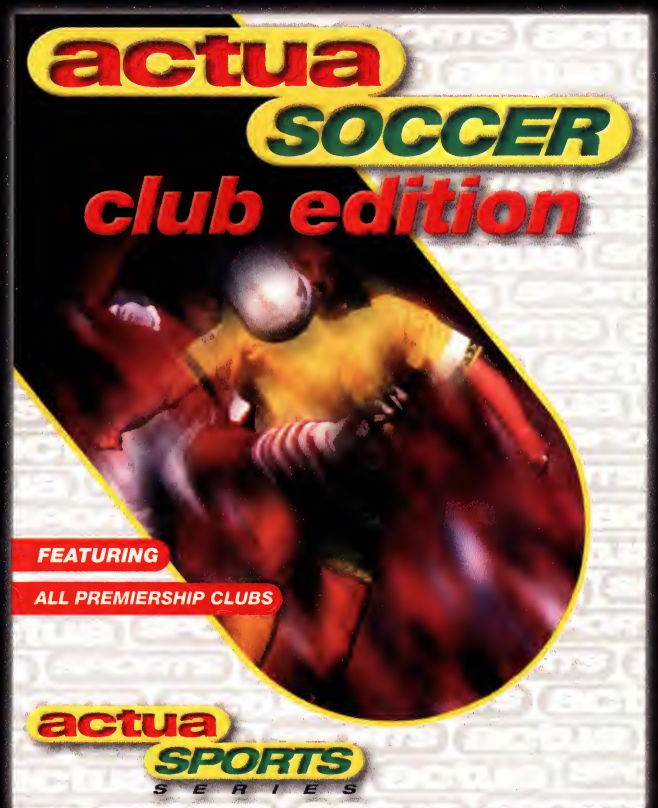
now you can **play** your premier **team**...

Actua Soccer is universally recognised as the greatest football game ever. Here is just one of many testimonials:

*"The best footy game around.
It's almost like playing the real thing.
Beautiful."*

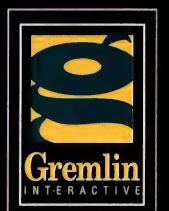
Five Star Rating - Essential Playstation

Now with Actua Soccer Club Edition, as well as all the action and authenticity of the original, you can play your favourite Premier League side with new live interactive commentary from football's finest, Barry Davies.



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**PC
ZONE**

our price

CHART

Predictions



TAR WARS FANS ARE BEING OFFERED YET ANOTHER TREAT THIS MONTH WITH THE much awaited *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* going straight in at No 1 in the Our Price chart. As a continuation of the successful *Star Wars* promotion, this excellent new title doesn't fail to excite and is deserving of its top spot.

The football season may be drawing to a close on the pitch, but there's still a chance for all you sports enthusiasts to manage your own team. *Championship Manager 2* is at No 5 in the chart, and *Actua Soccer* still holds firm at No 4 in the chart, priced at just £7.99 – we challenge you to find it anywhere else for less!

To take part in this month's Our Price Top 10 prize giveaway, put pen to paper and answer the question below and send it in to: PC Zone Our Price Competition CPCZ77A, Bradley Pavilions, Bradley Stoke North, Bristol BS12 0BQ, UK.

OUR PRICE QUESTION:
What does the 'TIE' in
X-Wing vs TIE Fighter
stand for?

Rules and restrictions: All entries must be received by Friday 27 June 1997. No correspondence will be entered into. The Editor's decision is final and the winners will be notified by post. All other usual restrictions apply.



WATCH
THIS SPACE
FOR MORE
NEWS FROM OUR
PRICE NEXT
MONTH!

Welcome to PC Zone's version of *The Chart Show*, sponsored by Our Price. Each month it'll feature the titles we think will be flying off the shelves in the coming weeks, and it will also play host to exclusive news and competitions.

1

**X-WING VS
TIE FIGHTER**
(LucasArts)
£29.99



2

**THEME
HOSPITAL**
(Bullfrog)
£29.99



3

MDK
(Interplay)
£29.99



4

ACTUA SOCCER
(Gremlin Interactive)
£7.99



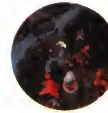
5

**CHAMPIONSHIP
MANAGER 2**
(EIDOS Interactive)
£9.99



6

C&C: RED ALERT
(Virgin)
£29.99



7

**C&C:
COUNTERSTRIKE**
(Virgin)
£14.99



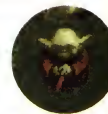
8

TOMB RAIDER
(EIDOS Interactive)
£29.99



9

YODA STORIES
(LucasArts)
£19.99



10

**TERMINATOR
SKYNET**
(Virgin)
£14.99



DISCLAIMER: The Top 10 printed is correct at the time of going to press but positions, titles and prices may vary throughout the month.



X-Wing vs Tie Fighter has over 70 separate keyboard commands. That's a lot. So many, in fact, that we *Zone* boys have decided to narrow all the shortcuts to a few choice essentials. No longer do you have to be an in-bred loon with six fingers and a vestigial hand in your scrotum to play.

SHIFT +	SHIFT + R	REPORT
SHIFT + A	SHIFT + S	REINFORCEMENTS!
SHIFT + C		
SHIFT + I	ALT + D	CYCLE DETAILS SETTINGS

Next Friendly Craft	Previous Friendly Craft	Next Enemy Craft	Previous Enemy Craft
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PRESET TARGETS
SHIFT + F5 thru F7 TO STORE

LASER RECHARGE	SHIELD RECHARGE		
----------------	-----------------	--	--



DEL FULL THROTTLE	
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This keyboard template has been created by *PC Zone* for purchasers of the game *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter*, published by LucasArts. It is not approved or endorsed in any way by LucasArts. All rights reserved.

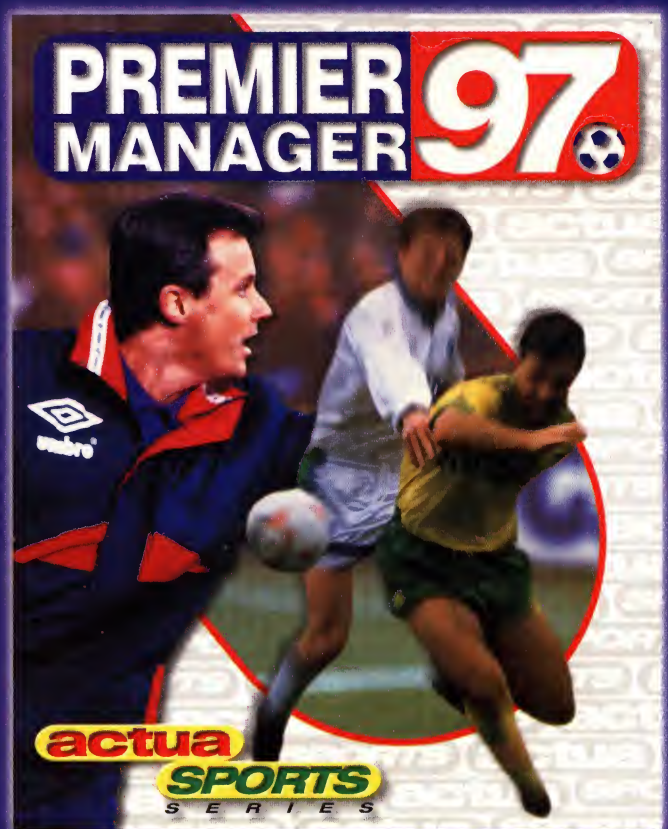
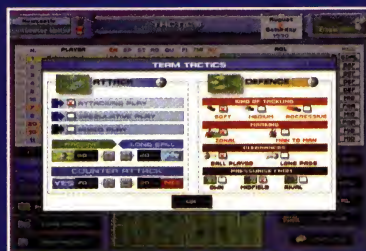
	S	W	D	T					Y	I	[]	P	ENTER
	CYCLE SHIELDS	CHANGE WEAPON	DAMAGE ASSMNT	CYCLE TARGETS					PREVIOUS TARGET	NEAREST MISSILE	THROTTLE 1/3 POWER	THROTTLE 2/3 POWER	NEAREST PLAYER	MATCH SPEED
/	X	C	G							M	,	'	.	/
THROTTLE ZERO POWER	WEAPONS CONFIG	COUNTER MEASURES	MISSIONS GOALS							MAP	REDIRECT SHIELDS	REDIRECT LASERS	COCKPIT ON/OFF	EXTERNAL CAMERA

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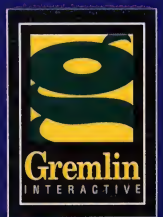


AUTUMN 1997



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Oi!

He's young, rich and famous. He's tall, dark and handsome. He's made his name with *Doom* and *Quake*. And he has a reputation as one of the greatest Deathmatchers in the world. But that's enough about **David McCandless** (aka UberFrag). Time to talk to ex-id Software supremo – John Romero.

...John Romero

JOHN ROMERO IS THE NEAREST THING the games industry has to a pop star. He's got square-jawed looks, long 'on a steel horse he rides' hair, and an expensive car for every day of the week. He's 29 and various estimates put his personal value at:

- a) \$4 million
- b) \$10 million
- c) \$Quadsquillion.

A founder member of id Software, he designed *Doom* and that seminal first episode, *Knee Deep In The Dead*, as well as working on earlier titles such as *Wolfenstein* and *The Catacomb Abyss*. He invented the word 'Deathmatch', and worked out the uberspoogeworthy feel of networked *Doom*. However, after the two year development hell of *Quake*, Romero felt like he needed to move on, and so started his own Dallas-based company, Ion Storm, with former id biz guy Mike Wilson, former id founder member and ex-3D Realms svengali Tom Hall, plus extra man power from ex-7th Level designer Todd Porter, and a bunch of raw talent recruited from the Internet and beyond. After a furious round of bidding, and much airing of the concept behind Romero's latest game – *Daikatana* – publisher EIDOS signed them up for a cool \$10 million.

Yummy, yummy, in my tummy

Recently Romero and his posse visited the fair city of London. To sample the delights of the poshest London eateries. To stay in the most expensive hotel in town. To drink copious amounts of alcohol. And, of course, to speak to *PC Zone*. In that order.

Scene 1: A nervous UberFrag enters the Atlantic Bar & Grill, a posh upon posh eatery in central London. A posh Quentos waiter snarls at the casually dressed UberFrag. His snarl turns to a grimace of agony as the UberFrag splinters his windpipe with one well-placed blow from the dessert spoon concealed under his right sleeve. As the Quentoid waiter slips to the ground, gargling and flailing mindlessly at the spoon handle jutting from his throat, the UberFrag marches over to a posh table where 11 Ion Storm types are gathered.

UberFrag: Hi!

Romero: Hey!

Mike Wilson: Hey!

Todd Porter: Hey!

Tom Hall: Hey

The heys over with, we knuckle down to some serious idle chit-chat.

So, what's this Daikatana all about?

Romero: It's kinda like *Quake* with beat 'em up and role-playing game sensibilities. Very Deathmatch intensive. With time-travelling, 64 monsters and 32 weapons. It's actually like a Japanese game. You play with two other computer-controlled characters who are talking to you all the time. And it uses the *Quake* engine.

What's your game?



How you soaked up the Quake engine in any way?

Romero: Yeah, we've got a new palette on every level and we're upping the animation frame rate to 22 frames per second. The skins are higher resolution, and the characters will have 500 polygons instead of 150... we're basically taking it up to the next level.

Why did you start your own company?

Romero: I just wanted something new and different. I wanted to build a company that we all want to work for. That's myself, Tom and Todd. We all could've started three new companies. But instead Ion Storm is like an umbrella organisation. Three studios in the same building.

And how's it panning out?

Romero: We've got 60 people working for us. That's 58 designers, artists and programmers - and then three biz guys. We've hired a bunch of mappers who worked on stuff like *Doom: The Master Levels* and *Final Doom*.

Wilson: On every person's desk, you'll find two 21-inch monitors and two Pentium 200s. Every single desk. We don't let technology stand in the way. Not having equipment is frustrating.

Romero: And all the machines are primed for Deathmatch. All the mice are clean. We have all the best keyboards, best video cards. Everyone has the best Deathmatch machine.

Wilson: You should see our office man. On the top of this really famous Dallas building with a hole in it. We've got 60-foot arched glass ceilings, concrete floors and girders.

Romero: It's the kind of place you always wanted a games developer's office to look like.

Wilson: It's the Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory of Gaming. We've even got Oompa Loompas. Of our 60 people 35 are midgets. And there are LSD dispensers in the hall.

Wilson:

Romero: Karma man. Karma.

Scene 2: Later in the meal. Everyone is relaxed and chatting. A new waiter has taken over. He looks vaguely condescending. The UberFrag momentarily considers using The Spoon, but then thinks again. The conversation has turned, inevitably, to Deathmatching.

Will every Ion Storm game be multi-player?

Romero: All our titles will always be multi-player and co-operative.

Who's the best Deathmatchers at Ion Storm?

Romero: Nope. Shadow is number one. Me and Squirrel are tied for two. Shadow is like a Borg. He assimilates data. Once he beats you, you'll never beat him again.

Wilson: It took John a little while to accept that. He tried to fight it.

Romero: I'm gonna crack his fucking skull open. That's what's gonna happen. When I get back. He's going down.

So you do get beaten?

Romero: Yeah. By girls too. There's one called Killcreek, a female *Quake* player. I gave her a man-beating and then she came back and beat me down. Then I had to set up a shrine for her. So, on my Website, there's a picture of her

with loads of flowers and me saying: "Put some cream on it mommy." She's good.

Interesting.

Romero: Do you like Daddy's Milk?

Excuse me?

Romero: Put some cream on it mommy.

Sorry?

Romero: The matches between the best guys at work are called Milk Matches. They're really hardcore. Two-player to 50 frags, best out of three games. Usually just getting one frag is like five minutes or something. The score goes up and down. It can take five hours to play one session. But it's a Milk Match and whoever loses has to drink some milk out of our jug of milk which has been sitting there for five months. Daddy's special milk.

Oh God.

Romero: Hahahahahaha.

With a straw or lips on the glass?

Romero: No, no. It's like a gallon of rotten milk. Pour it into a cup. Comes out as yellow blocks like cheesecake. You gotta be really serious if you want to play a Milk Match.

Scene 3: The end of the meal. Coffee has been dispensed. The waiter raised a manicured eyebrow when I said 'espresso' instead of 'espresso'. He was lucky I was in a good mood. He would've been sucking spoon otherwise. As the warmth of a full meal fills my body, I realise that nobody else has eaten.

You guys not eating?

Wilson: We went down to Burger King before we came here. We're sick of braised duck feet and pig's ass on toast. We solidified our position as shit Americans as we tried to walk in with our Burger Kings.

Romero: Yeah, they were like: "You can't bring that in here." So we went outside and ate it. I'm sick of this foo-foo-food. I wanted Burger King.

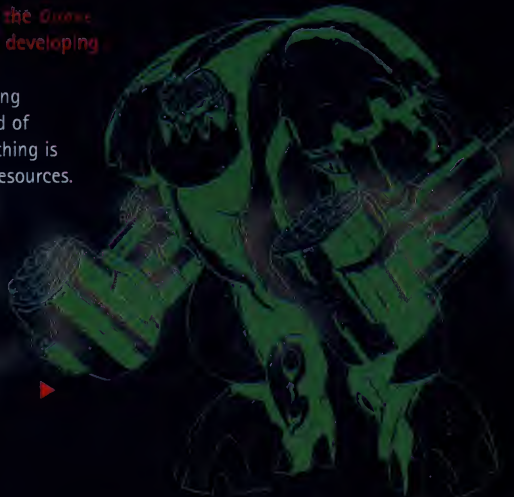
You do QuakeWorld much?

Romero: No, I never go on *QuakeWorld*. Never. Ever. Not interested. I'd rather have a local master server than a world-wide thing. Most of the people I play are at work. I want to play on a LAN. It would be great to have a ranking list at work.

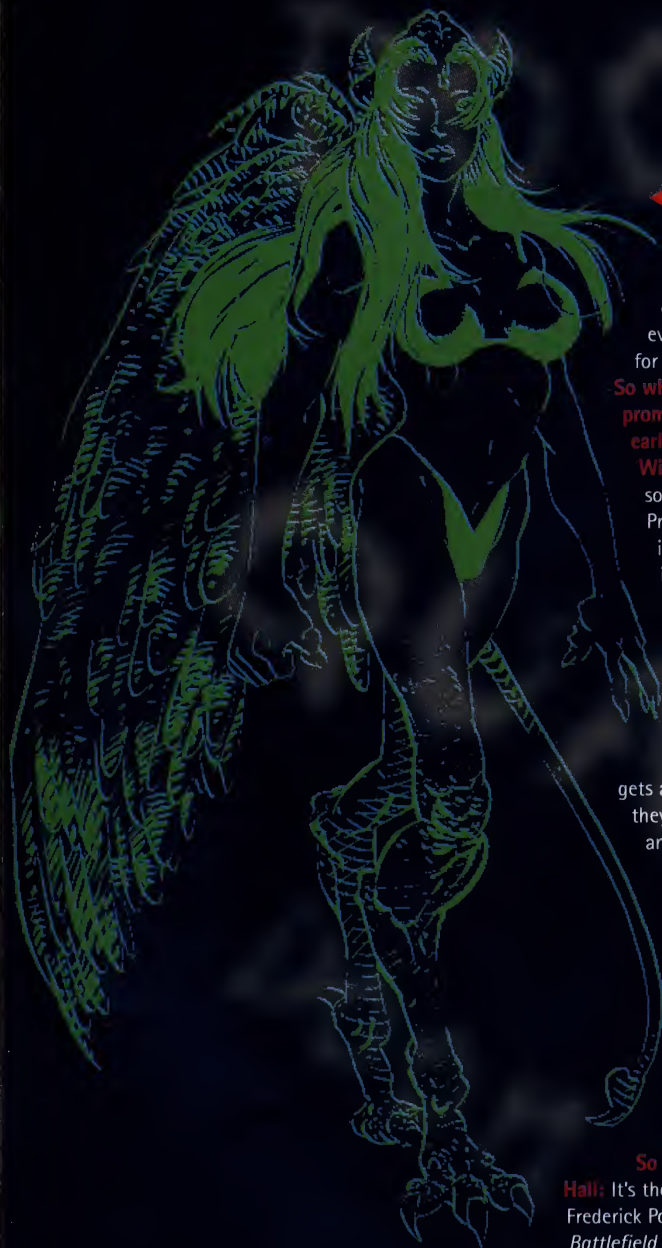
Why did you buy the Quake engine instead of developing your own?

Romero: This buying technology instead of trying to make it thing is really freeing up resources.

The game is only eight months away. It's silly to try and create your own technology. It's like a 3D modeller trying to



(Above) The story so far... *Wolfenstein*, *Doom*, *Doom 2* and *Quake*. Not bad for a young 'un brought up on a diet of Burger King?



(Above) An early sketch from the forthcoming *Daikatana*. Nice legs, shame about the claws.

◀ write his own 3D Studio. The licensing of technology has allowed design to take over and now it gives a chance for everyone to be id, because everyone has John Carmack working for them.

So what happened to all those grand promises made about *Quake* in the early days?

Wilson: With *Quake*, there were some pretty ambitious promises made. Promises that were meant to be kept but if you don't know what the technology is, you don't know what your canvas is to work with.

Buy you're still talking to id though, right?

Wilson: We're still talking to id. We have to get code updates.

Because of things said in the press and things taken out of context, it gets a bit touchy. A bit competitive. And, they're getting royalties from our games anyway, so it's got to be a happy thing.

Scene 4: In 'da limo'. Cruising through Piccadilly in a 12-seater Jaguar. Romero's had to go off and do some other 'meejah' stuff, so the UberFrag is on the back seat, talking to Tom Hall, who's reading a copy of Celebrity Sleuth (an American magazine full of naked, rutting celebrities).

So tell us about *AniChromal*

Hall: It's the game I always wanted to do. Like Frederick Pohl's *Gateway* or L Ron Hubbard's *Battlefield Earth*, it's an epic adventure, a struggle where you try to do things and they don't always go right but you keep going on.

What's the basic gist?

Hall: The universe is collapsing around you and you have to stop it somehow.

It uses the *Quake* engine, right?

Hall: Right, but it's not going to be first-person. It's going to be third-person, 45 degree and then when you talk to people it will actually zoom in to a face-to-face view. It's going to have cool cinematic pans around fights and be really dynamic and exciting. That's the power of the *Quake* engine - it allows you to tell an epic story and make it visually compelling, bringing the player right into the game. It's gameplay with movie-esque beauty to it.

But it's an RPG?

Hall: It's an approachable RPG. There's not like 500 stats - just three. More than that though, it's character-driven. What I like to do with games is to bring in characters who are sort of humorous at the start. Like *Lethal Weapon*.

You're laughing with the guys. They're your buddies. And then you take the character down to darker and darker things and by the end people are dying and suffering, so you really feel that at a gut level.

Sounds huge.

Hall: Yep. Every character has a speaking role with full speech. It will probably be a DVD or

three-CD game.

The design brief is already 342 pages. When I finish this, I'll take a week off and then start work on the next two sequels I've got planned.

Just like George Lucas.

Hall: He's a good role model.

Scene 5: In Tower Records, Piccadilly Circus. We're mouching around, browsing for records. Todd Porter and I are waiting for the others. One of the shop assistants sort of wrinkled his nose at one of my purchases (The Best Of A-Ha) so I'm fingering The Spoon nervously in my pocket.

So what's *Romora* all about?

Porter: It's a real-time strategy game with an action game feel. I was previously a lead designer at 7th Level. I did *Genome* and *Dominion*. *Romora* is very different though. You play an intelligent mollusc who actually attaches itself to a supersized superhero alien creature, called a Lug Muscle Alien. You're controlling it so the *Romora* creature becomes its brain. You'll also take over different creatures in the game.

Are you using the *Quake* engine too?

Porter: No, we're using a new 3D Voxel engine. It's amazing. You get a high face count and 16 creatures on screen at 60 frames per second. I guess we're in a *Diablo* vein but the game is a lot more detailed. We're doing thousands and thousands of movements because they're 3D and free. All with lights and shadows. Real-time shadows and real-time lights.

Will you have weapons and stuff?

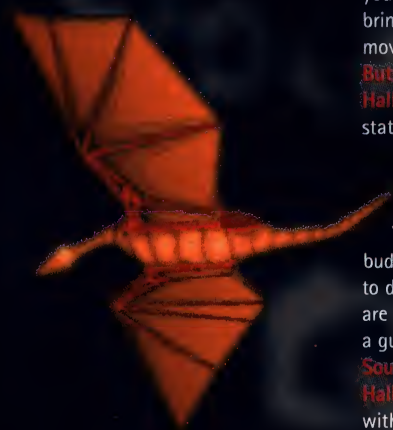
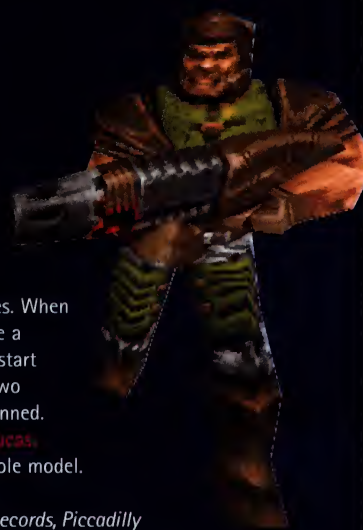
Porter: The whole system, the way you get around the weapons and vehicles etc is all built out of McGyvering things together. You pull parts of an old spacecraft here and then maybe use a plant over there to build new equipment. So we expect recipes to be uploaded to our Website. You'll be able to change the attributes of a weapon, using matter converters, adapting the damage level, visual effect etc.

Cool. When's it out?

Porter: Not until the end of 1998.

Ah.

Scene 6: Much later in the evening. Romero has returned and we are all now dining at Mezzo, a very posh restaurant in Soho. The UberFrag, after much wine and champagne, is exceedingly drunk. He and Romero have entered an intense discussion about the important things in life: Doom, Deathmatch, and Quake.



Romero: I designed the entire first episode.

Cool. Spoooge. The first level of *Doom* did, indeed, 'rock'.

Romero: Yeah, I remember what Tim Willits [Level designer at id Software] told me about that episode. The keypress which changed his life. He downloaded *Doom* and for hours him and his friend are moving around the first room, just going wow. They haven't even realised that it's an entire level, or like eight more maps after that. Then Tim goes down this corridor and presses a space against the wall. And it's a door and it opens and he sees beyond that first room. And it blows his mind. He described it as "the keypress which changed my life".

Bit like having your first orgasm?

Romero: Er, yeah.

But *Doom* has something special, something...

Romero: Something magic?

Yeah.

Romero: I know.

Quake doesn't have it. But don't you think that it was somehow magic? That you couldn't recreate it?

Romero: No. Everything in *Doom* was designed. The player's run speed. The speed of the rockets. We were playing it all the time. That rocket should be faster. The shotgun should do more damage, and so on.

But *Quake* - doesn't have the same feel.

Romero: Well, that game wasn't designed.

It all comes down to player run speed.

Heretic and *Hexen* - they didn't cut it in Deathmatch, because the players ran too fast. But *Doom* was perfect. In *Quake*, the player runs too slow. All the elements from *Doom* were shoved in. But it wasn't designed and the one-player game wasn't really that great. I knew *Doom* was going to be the biggest game ever. Just like I know *Daikatana* is going to be bigger.

CA

Full name: John Romero

Age: 29

Nationality: American

("with some Spanish")

Favourite Spice Girl: Posh

Previous work experience:

1987: Origin Systems, programmer, Commodore 64 version of *2400AD*

1990: SoftDisk, part of team on *Commander Keen 1*

1991: id Software, programming and design, *Wolfenstein 3D*

1993: id Software, level design and game testing, *Doom*

1994: id Software, level design, *Doom II*

1996: id Software, level design and concept, *Quake*

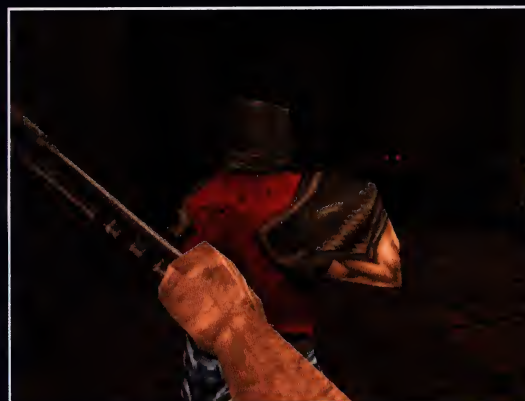
Other interests:

Deathmatching and games



Tune in next month for more UberFrag On The Lap Of Romero and the start of our amazing *Daikatana* Diary.

(Below and right) He may not be the greatest at Deathmatch, but at least our UberFrag gave Mr Romero a run for his money when he came to the Zone office.



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January '97

PC Zone
92%

"... the in-game graphics have to be seen to be believed."
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86%

"Do we recommend it? Of course we bloody do!"
December '96

PC Home
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"This is a great game with an atmospheric and intriguing plot."
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PC Power
94%

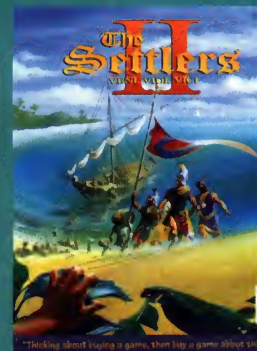
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HEXEN II



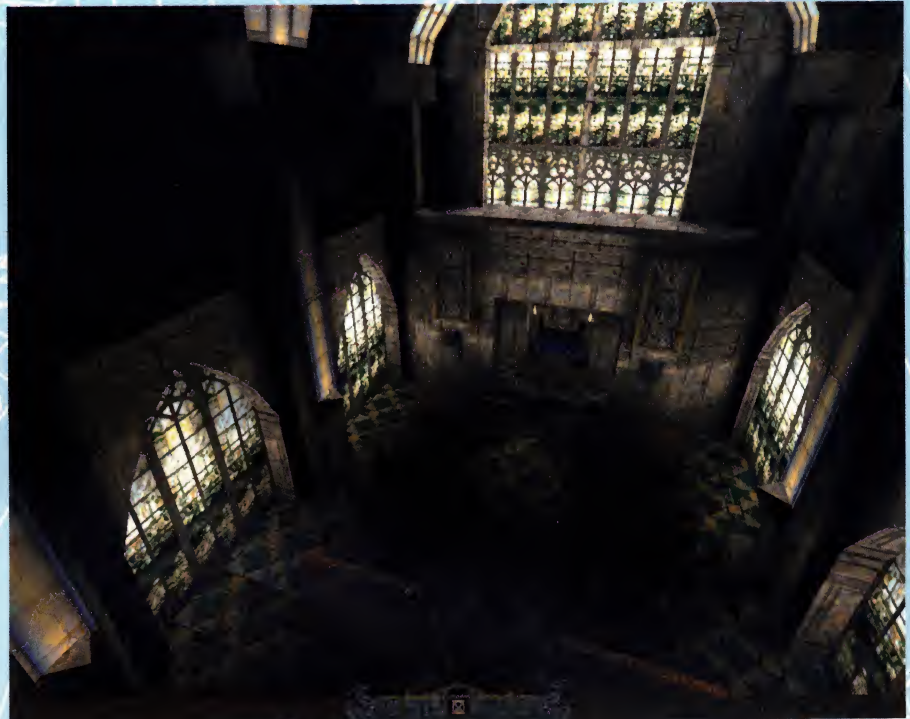
Well, we're really looking forward to this one. We spooed like a rank of synchronised fire extinguishers over *Hexen*. And now the *Quake*-engine sequel is looming. **David McCandless** brings you a fulsome orgy of features, info and rumours on the game they're already calling 'Quake In A Codpiece'.

7

IT'S A NATURAL PROGRESSION, REALLY. Somewhat predictable, both in concept and execution. See, we like *Quake*. And we liked *Hexen*. We like the idea of re-casting the frenetic action pace and pyrotechnics of *Quake* in a fantasy, AD&D-style setting. We warm to the concept of character class, inventory management and hub-based levels. And we feel a faint, indescribable trembling in our loins at the sight of lush visuals. So lummy if our little cholesterol coated hearts aren't a-pumping with expectation over *Hexen II*.

Those familiar with the original *Hexen* will be pleased to know that numero II retains a very similar outlook. It stands somewhere between a full role-playing game and a shoot 'em up. Character classes, an inventory, and a bunch of unwashed loin cloths rub shoulders alongside explosive projectile weapons, seriously mobile monsters, and the all-powerful Deathmatch mode. You can choose from four different character classes: Palladin, Necromancer, Assassin, and Crusader. Each one sports four individual weapons with two firing modes, making a total of er, (*immense pause as Windows calculator is loaded up to perform the most mundane of mental arithmetic tasks*) an amazing 32 different kinds of offensive weapons, plus more than 16 'specialised' power-ups and collectable objects, to be stashed in an eight-object inventory.

Hey, but that's not all. *Hexen II* also features substantial upgrades to the *Quake* engine, with all manner of new colour effects and 'real world' environments like towns



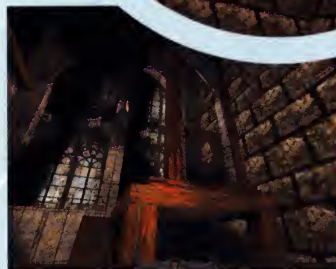
Ravensoft are busy recasting some of their more medieval, more cathedral locales from the original *Hexen* into the all new, all true 3D *Quake* engine.

and windmills. Plus everything will be 'blow-up-able' (as they say). Doors, windows, tables, scenic elements – the whole wardrobe.

Oooh, oooh, information overload, we hear you shriek in a Quentin-esque voice. Chill mon, we reply in a soothingly deep tone. We'll take the game part by part.

The plot

After the destruction of D'Sparil and Korax (your uber-enemies in *Heretic* and *Hexen* respectively), the forces of life figured the other Serpent Riders would go on holiday or something after finally realising they were going to get their arses kicked if they tried ▶



Greasy cobblestones. Lugubrious dungeons. Slimy oubliettes. Sewer systems. Cesspits. And some obligatory parapets. All essential mod cons for the modern day *Hexen* level.



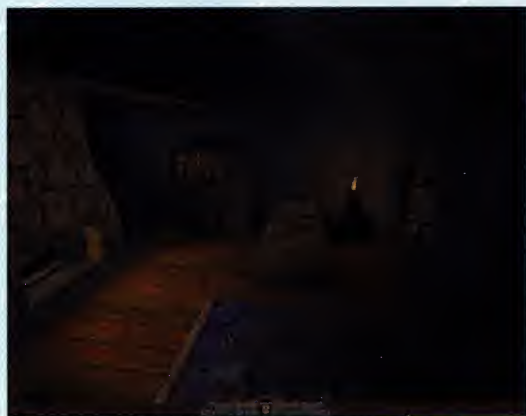
any more funny business. Yeah right. Eidolon, the third rider, stepped into the fray and swiftly took over mankind. And now it's up to you to step in and make a truce with those who were once your enemies – those who make up the character classes in the game – and save the universe.

The characters

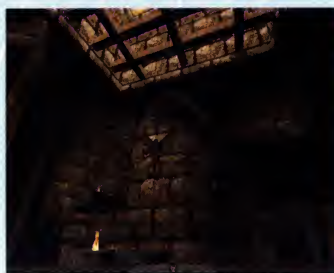
So you get together with the Necromancer, master of black magic, a female Assassin, a boring but dependable Crusader, and a Paladin. Two are evil. Two are good. Two are fun at parties. Two are not. Two read the good book. Two use pages of the good book to roll immense er, cigarettes. All four have substantial weaponry at their disposal, as well as 'special powers'.

The weapons

The Assassin, for example, starts with a dagger for stabbing and swinging. After some rummaging, she may find some grenades – short-range, bouncy models like the FireMace in *Heretic*. One step up from that is the crossbow, firing bolts which stick into walls and opponents before blowing up. If a Tome Of Power is collected at any stage, these weapons become souped-up. The dagger becomes poisoned, the grenades become exploding fragmentation bombs, and the crossbow fires flaming bolts.



Oooh look! – Real life things. Carpets, bookcases, and a bed. All fully blow-up-able, natch.



Gargoyles will be your main niggling adversary. They come in two flavours: flesh and stone.



Listen, right?

Hexen II was still at a fairly early stage when we looked at it and as a result many of the weapons were missing or the *Quake* weapons were still being used as place markers. None of the new weapons, power-ups and effects were fully confirmed by the time we went to press. So don't go setting fire to our faces if some of these features don't make it into the final game.

The Crusader's default weapon is a WarHammer, to be used in close combat, or as a hefty boomerang when in powered-up mode. He then graduates to the Ice Mace, a custom ball of ice firer (or blizzard summoner in mode two). Then comes the Meteor Staff – similar to the Ice Mace only rockier – and on its heels, the LightBringer, an immense energy weapon which can kill through walls.

As you'd expect, the Necromancer is redolent in all manner of voodoo-esque ordinance. He begins with bog-standard magic missiles, then progresses to Bone Shards, a shotgun-like spread of many chicken bones, or a very large bone indeed in powered-up mode. The ultimate Necro weapon however is a souped-up Staff Of Set, which fires a rotating shuriken through a level, dicing everything in its path.

Finally, the Paladin comes with a set of close combat armaments, starting with metal Gauntlets ('all the better to fist you with'), a sword (fiery if powered up), a two-handed axe, and then ultimately, a DragonStaff capable of firing diamond-like projectiles (nailgun-like), or, in special mode, a huge dragon-shaped fireball. Hmmm. Fireballs.

Special skills

Underlying all these outlandish weaponry and *Quake*-style fireworks is a thick vein of RPG-ity. Each character is endowed with an experience rating, graded in levels à la *Dungeons & Dragons*. As a player sails through levels, merrily chopping up monsters, not succumbing to traps, and finding all sorts of power-ups, their experience level increases. On the back of this, running speed will increase. Hit points will swell. Genitals may get bigger. Jumps will become higher. And special skills will emerge, particular to each character class.

When an inexperienced Necromancer kills an opponent, for instance, a 'soul sphere' appears and slowly fades away. A quick Nec' can nip in and pick this orb up, gaining mana and health. Sometimes, randomly, a monster may be raised from the dead from its soul sphere, and used zombie-like against opponents, even in Deathmatch. Finally, higher level Necros may emanate Cause Fear 'rays', making the more rubbish creatures run away.

Assassins can hide in the shadows and become invisible. Paladins can enter a strange purgatory if they are close to death, where a strange 'Avenge' mode takes over and allows them a burst of strength to finish off an opponent. The Cleric can be protected against poison, find traps and secrets, and be rescued from death by Divine Intervention. All these effects happen randomly based on chance (a roll of the virtual 88-sided die, you could say) with modifiers such as experience affecting the result.

Power-ups

Or rather, to use their correct Tolkien-esque moniker, 'artefacts'. Using an inventory system not dissimilar to *Duke Nukem's*, *Hexen II* allows a player to use to collect, horde, and then use all mana (*Har-de-har - Ed*) of objects and



Product details

Developer: Ravensoft/id Software

Publisher: Activision

Website: www.activision.com

Release Date: July

power-ups. Some work generally across character classes, others affect different classes differently.

On a basic level, you get stuff like torches, portable health and mana globules (rather like the *Nukem* Medikit), and super health. More interestingly, there's stuff like the Tome Of Power, a magic book no less, which will soup-up all your weapons, conjure a monster to do your bidding, create land mines, increase haste for accelerated running, and polymorph with the *Hexen II* equivalent of the Porkelator (no news on which farmyard animal it will turn its victim into). Another cool-sounding power-up is Mirror Image, which creates a computer-controlled clone which will run around a level, distracting your enemies. The Wings Of Wrath will also make a guest appearance, allowing players to smoothly navigate the more aerial elements of each map.

The monsters

Monstie-wise, you get what you expect with *Hexen II*. Ravensoft have always specialised in more troll-packed escapades (*Dark Crypt*, *Shadow Caster*, *Hexen*, *Heretic* - see a pattern?). Many of the enemies in number two are directly pilfered from *Hexen* one, only of course this time, they're fully polygonal 3D and look fantastic. We'll just list them here, because, quite frankly, they're self-explanatory.

You got: Imps, ice and fire; Golems, made of rivets, brass, or stone; Skull Wizards, floating mages which summon spiders and scorpions who, in turn, can climb walls and ceilings and poison you; Bile-spitting Hydra lurk underwater; Medusas and mummies.

The levels

There are plans for three distinctive areas in *Hexen II*: medieval, Egyptian and Roman. The medieval section is decked out in Tudor panelled villages, windmills, cathedrals, graveyards, subterranean catacombs, and various 'real-life' touches. The Egyptian and Roman areas

are reasonably predictable - the screenshots say it all.

Again, though, Ravensoft are planning a hub-based level system. Unlike *Quake*, where you go from level to level, in *Hexen II*, you'll be able to return to a central level or hub, and then revisit the old or explore the new. This makes for some interesting multi-level conundrums, as well as an increased non-linear RPG feel to the whole game. Yah?

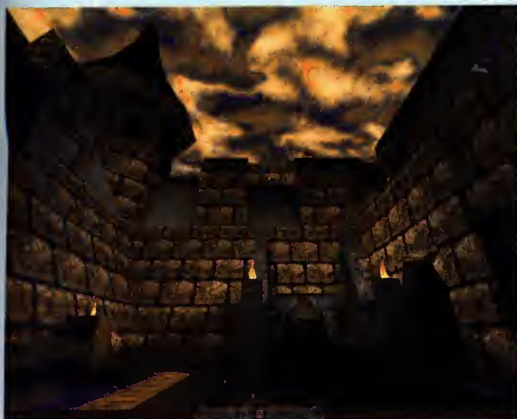
Overall

Basically, as we said at the beginning, we're pretty freaking excited about this look to say the least. It looks fabulouso, and new enhancements to the *Quake* engine should ensure that it circumvents problems and builds on the advantages of the engine. Deathmatch, too, should be much improved

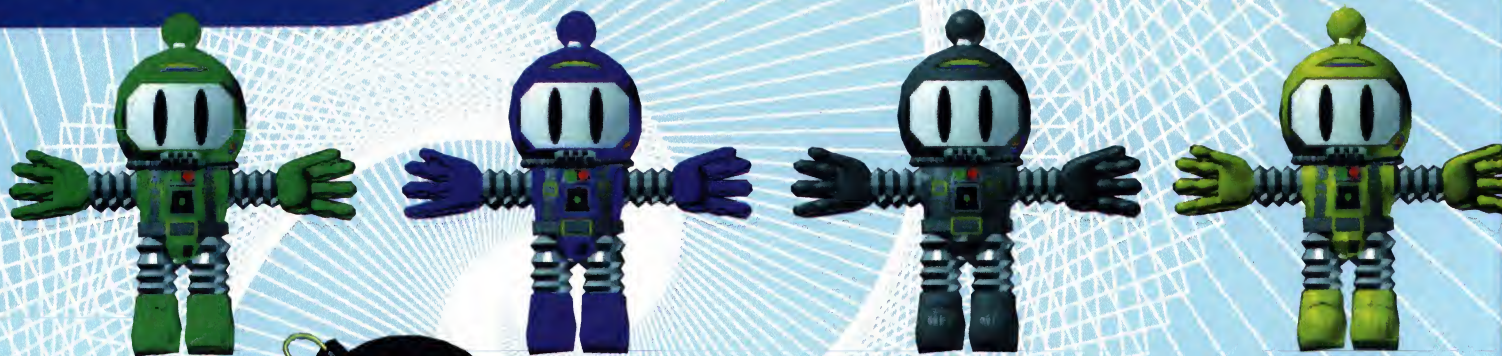
A player progresses. Their level increases. Hit points swell. You can jump more. Genitals may get bigger.

over *Hexen*'s rather poor effort. Ravensoft are hoping to include all manner of Capture The Flag and King Of The Castle options, as well as some more original ways of working the character experience system into wholesale office flogathons.

Key-press lovers and the Anne Boleyns among us will welcome the addition of crouching (at last), as well as pushing, pulling, the dropping of specific objects in backpacks, and woowoooooo - rain effects for us to drown out. Since Ravensoft are using the latest version of the *Quake* engine, you can also expect the game to be fully compliant with 3Dfx accelerator cards and perhaps even Direct3D enhancements. **Z**



Being a spawn of *Quake*, *Hexen II* comes ready and giggling with all the super features which made *Quake* so customisable. Aside from all the cool lighting effects, you can set your own 'camera angle' field of view and define keyboard short cuts to highlight your hair or pierce your nipples or whatever it is you do in these games.



ATOMIC BOMBERMAN

Some people say **Charlie Brooker** has a short fuse. You can finish the joke off yourself. We're getting down to some bombing.

B

IG SMILE. BIG ULTRABRITE SMILE. Bomberman is about to arrive on the PC. It's been here before, sort of, in the form of Dyna Blaster, but we'll ignore that because it came out ages ago and never really cut the mustard anyway. Now we can all look forward to Atomic Bomberman from Interplay (licensed, fact fans, from Hudsonsoft, the game's Japanese creators) with all the salivating, seat-shifting expectancy of an ex-convict in a Parisian cathouse waiting room. If you're not on the Bomberman bus, you're no friend of mine.

Oh, sorry. There I was presuming that you're already familiar with the game. Many of you probably are.

Sorry, but you're just going to have to bear with me while I get the slowpokes up to speed. Don't worry, it'll be worth the wait. This new, improved version of the game features several key enhancements which I'll describe in a moment. But first, for those of you who haven't got a clue what I'm going on about, here's a little primer...

Boom bang-a-bang

Classic Bomberman is an ingenious blend of pie-simple puzzling and tooth-and-nail bastardry. As far as multi-player gaming goes it almost *almost* wins out over *Quake*. Yes, really. Here's the deal: you take control of a winsome round-headed chap clad in a brightly-coloured helmet (and matching costume), running around inside a single-screen playing zone. Each arena consists of a gridlike arrangement of indestructible blocks, a random scattering of destructible ones (which may or may not conceal power-ups), and of course, your opponents. All the players are armed with bombs: jolly-looking cartoon explosives which bulge ominously for a few seconds once activated, then explode in four directions at once, destroying blocks and toasting the enemy in the process. The aim is to be the last man standing. And the first man gloating.

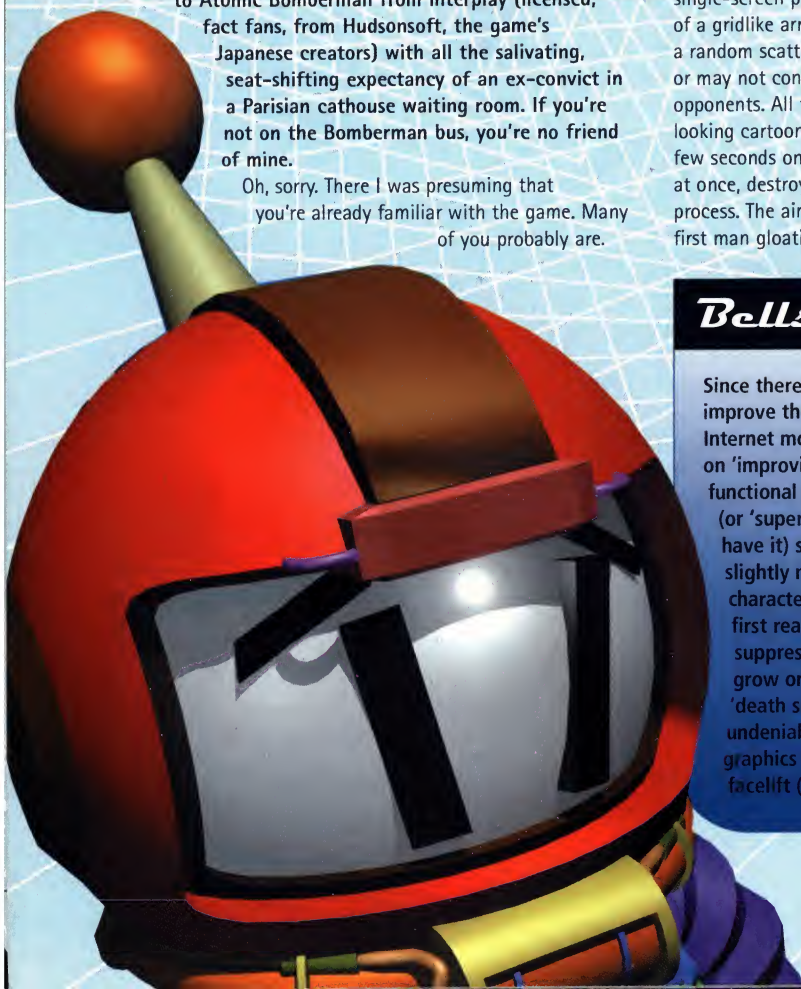
(Below) In the final game, the different 'Bomberman' will display different characteristics. Here's 'Blue' playing catch. With a bomb.



Bells and whistles

Since there was little they could do to improve the gameplay (aside from the Internet mode), Interplay have gone to town on 'improving' Bomberman's traditionally functional sound and graphics. The pint-sized (or 'super deformed', as the Japs would have it) sprites have been replaced with slightly more 'realistic' pre-rendered characters (for a purist such as myself, the first reaction to this is a wail of barely-suppressed dismay, although they do grow on you after a while, and the varied 'death sequence' animations are undeniably cool). Likewise, the level graphics themselves have been given a facelift (partially in order to disguise their

inherent simplicity, methinks). But the one thing that really stood out in the early version Interplay supplied us with was the sound – there's tons of it, too much for my liking. It seems the programmers have assigned noises they think are 'cool' to almost every conceivable event, which means your ears will be ringing with the sound of Jim Carrey sound-a-likes saying "Ooh, that's gotta hurt" every ten seconds. Hopefully the bulk of these crappy (and utterly superfluous) samples won't make it into the final code (although I doubt they will, since one of them includes the word 'fuck', and besides, they take up a whopping 104Mb of hard drive space). I shall not be a happy man if they do





Sounds like simple arcade tomfoolery? Well, in many ways it is – but the beauty of *Bomberman* is that it never, ever gets boring. The slew of deceptively simplistic power-ups (whose effects can often turn a game around), the frenetic pace (each round lasts just two minutes – after one minute, the walls start closing in), and the ruthless dog-eat-dog gameplay all combine to produce a multi-player experience best described as 'sodding perfect'.

So, that's *Bomberman*, then. The good news is that Interplay are retaining all the elements that made the original game so incredibly wonderful. For purists, there's an option to play in 'classic' mode, which should be more or less identical to the benchmark SNES version. And for the non-purists, there's a dizzying range of new power-ups, graphics, sound effects, stages (there's even a level editor, geekboy),

(Above) The Internet play option should see legions of Bombermen going bomb-dropping bonkers right across the globe.

(Left) The game may not look particularly stunning, but trust us – it's as addictive as crack cocaine.

I am king of Bomberman

Read the above again. It's true. I, Charlie Brooker, am the greatest *Bomberman* player in the world. Perhaps. Well, I'm certainly the best *Bomberman* player I've ever met. If you're reading this and you reckon you're pretty good at the game yourself, forget it. You're piss compared to me.

I'm no Johnny-come-lately *Bomberman* fan, either. What's that? You've played it on the MegaDrive? Pah! The MegaDrive version was shit! I was hammering the opposition in five-player tournaments on NEC's PC Engine* years back, sunshine. But it was the original Super Nintendo version at which I truly excelled. We played it solidly round my house. And no matter who took me on, I always came out on top. Before long, everybody else was forced to gang up against me in each and every round, in a desperate attempt to secure their own

survival – all to no avail. There was a period lasting almost a year, during which heavy *Bomberman* sessions took place practically every day, yet still no one – I repeat – no one, could win an overall match against me. Okay, so I'm a bit out of practice, but after a few minutes spent dabbling with *Atomic Bomberman*, the old skills came rushing back to the fore again. Now I'm throwing down the gauntlet: if Interplay sort out the Internet play mode correctly, I'll take you all on. And I'll kick your sorry arses from here to the outskirts of Losertown. Got that?

* The PC Engine was a funny little 8-bit Japanese console which specialised in lightning-fast shoot 'em ups, weird platform games revolving around bodily functions and of course, *Bomberman*. And no, it's got nothing to do with IBM PCs.



(Above and right) *Bomberman* is a classic example of exemplary Japanese game design. The new version from Interplay looks a tad more 'American', but it's tops anyway.

and animated death sequences. See the section headed 'Bells and whistles' for more information on those – or keep reading, for the really big news...

Ten men enter, one man leaves

Whereas most previous *Bomberman* incarnations have limited the action to four or five players, in *Atomic Bomberman*, up to ten of you can play at once. Yes, ten. There are no less than three ways of achieving this; either string a bunch of Microsoft SideWinder joypads together (and buy a gigantic monitor so everyone can see), play the game on a LAN (Local Area Network, where have you been?), or across the Internet. If Interplay can sort out this final option so that it works – and works well – we could be looking at the greatest on-line game to date. No kidding. Let's be honest: since both require the exchange of reams of information at lightning speed in order to work effectively, Internet *Quake* and *Red Alert* are far too choppy – not to mention complicated – to achieve truly massive on-line popularity, while *Bomberman*'s pick-up-and-play simplicity and extraordinarily addictive combat deserves to spread across the globe like a nasty rumour.

Atomic Bomberman is due for release very, very soon. There's a demo on this month's CD to give you a glimpse of what all the fuss is about. Next month though, we'll be reviewing the final version. **Z**

Bomberman Masterclass

Here are a few practical tips that any would-be BombMeisters out there should take heed of. They won't make sense until you've actually played the game, but hey – there's a demo level on this month's CD, so that's no problem. We're so good to you. Talk about an all-round service.



Make the most of each bomb. In the opening seconds of a *Bomberman* face-off, it's absolutely imperative that you destroy as many blocks as possible, as quickly as possible. It increases your chances of grabbing some cool power-ups, and it also gives you room to breathe. You should aim to destroy at least three blocks per bomb planted. Any less and you're a bit of a Quentin.



You can spot a novice *Bomberman* player by their tendency to run as far away as possible whenever they clap eyes on an enemy bomb. Pathetic cowards, the lot of them. As a bomb explodes, the flares travel in four directions only. Just pop round the closest corner and you'll be perfectly safe.



Chain reactions: both your best friend and your worst enemy. A well-placed bomb can set off a cataclysmic string of explosions which leaves the enemy dead and bewildered (in that order). Be on your guard, however, as it's shockingly easy to find yourself accidentally caught in the firing line. A classic example is the unexpected firestorm which engulfs any player foolish enough to kick a bomb along the ground towards another that's about to blow. Don't say we didn't warn you.



Use wraparound to your advantage. Punch a bomb off the side of the screen and you'll see it reappear on the opposite side – ideal for launching surprise attacks on complacent dawdlers, and for causing virgin players to whine "That's not fair – I didn't know you could do that." That's because you didn't try, loser.



Blitzing wins battles. Practise dropping multiple bombs at speed – not in a straight line, but in a snaking bomb-gap-bomb formation. It's the best way to get blanket coverage of large areas, and has the added advantage of scaring the shit out of everybody else.



Always, always, always, always, always, always, always, always watch your back.



Don't be afraid to die. Rush at your opponents' bombs and punch them back over their heads. Dash

inbetween live devices in the final pico-second before they detonate. Go on the offensive even if your enemies have ten times the number of power-ups you have. Never cower, never retreat. In *Bomberman* tournaments, he who dares, wins.



Get the boxing glove. Get the boxing glove. Clear enough for you?



Exploit your opponents' greed. When they spot a particularly tasty power-up, it's a well-known malady among gamers that they tend to develop a weird kind of tunnel vision. Take it from me, they won't notice you darting behind them and laying an egg... until it's too late. Ho ho ho.

Europe is on the brink of the first world war. The world is changing and you need to choose sides. If you do not act, your fate will be sealed

"...the key here is atmosphere.

It's a vital ingredient to murder mystery adventure games. And The Last Express has a steam full of the stuff."

4/5 Stars

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"A gorgeous looking
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immediately" 8/10

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Richly detailed
and historically
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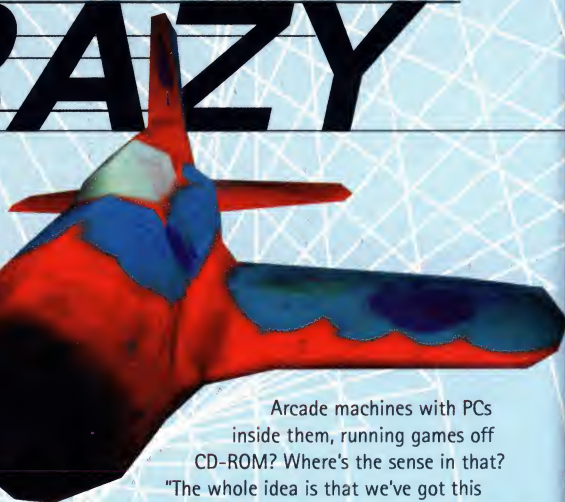
Over 30 main
characters

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PLANE CRAZY



Arcade machines with PCs inside them, running games off CD-ROM? Where's the sense in that? "The whole idea is that we've got this 'theatrical release model'," explained Andrew as he led me to a PC demonstrating a playable version of *Plane Crazy*. "It's like going to the cinema. The films are released to cinemas first (where you pay to see it), then there's a release to video later on (where everyone gets to take it home). Releasing *Plane Crazy* to the arcades first will generate lots of feedback that we can then use and build on before releasing the home version to PC audiences later in the year. We'll provide more courses, more features, better graphical content, support for specific accelerator cards – a whole host of reasons which will make the player want to go out and buy it again. The home version will have five courses (as opposed to three in the arcade) and a plane customisation feature which will allow players to tinker with both the flight models and the textures of the planes themselves. Graphically, in the arcades it'll run at 640x480, true colour, at a minimum 30fps – at home it'll depend on what card you have inside your machine."

A new PC racing game set to appear in the arcades first you say? We'll send **Paul Mallinson** over to check it out right away!

R

REMEMBER THE DAYS WHEN THE WORDS 'arcade perfect' meant everything to the games-buying public? I do. I was there man. Putting my money on the table man, buying those cool cassette tapes, man. Getting sucked in by the marketing bullshit, man. 'Arcade perfect' my arse. An 8x8 sprite on an eight-colour background? They said these games were arcade perfect and we believed them. Boy, were we stupid.

Nowadays the reverse seems to be happening: home gaming technology has risen to arcade standards, but no one, it seems, is prepared to use the term 'arcade perfect' to describe their games anymore. It's a sad state of affairs – there should be a campaign to bring it back.

Vote Arcade Perfect

Inner Workings, an interactive entertainment development team based in Glasgow, reckon their new high-speed, airborne racing game *Plane Crazy* will be one of the first ever games truly worthy of the award 'arcade perfect'. The reason? *Plane Crazy* is to be released as an arcade machine first, under the auspices of the Microsoft PublicPC initiative – a campaign which aims to encourage the adoption by the coin-op industry of high-powered PCs running accelerated games under Windows 95.

"We've always said that the PC is the premier gaming platform. Now we can cement that with Microsoft's PublicPC initiative and have truly arcade perfect games on our PCs at home," said Andrew Walker, head of games development, when I visited him recently to look at his game.



This early conceptual sketch shows what we've to look forward to in later levels. Moving trains we can't wait to see!

Based on a true story

The idea for *Plane Crazy* came from a sport called 'pylon racing' – a, would you believe, real-life pastime of pilots who race each other at dangerously low levels for money and fame.

"Well-knowns, with great names like Buzz and Chuck – these real nutters, flying the most amazingly 'compact' planes – would come from far and wide to compete," recalls Andrew as he points out the individual planes on-screen.

"These planes here are actually modelled on those pilot racing planes. There's the Chubb – which is really nothing more than an engine with two stumpy wings – it's hugely fast, but not very manoeuvrable, and then there's a varying array of customised Mustangs."

Although *Plane Crazy* has essentially been designed as a pretty straightforward arcade racer, Andrew and his team are making sure the player is treated to much more than an uneventful lightning-fast dash to the finish. Pulling



Running at a cool 30 frames per second, *Plane Crazy's* accelerated graphics are already looking completely skill.





You could say *Plane Crazy* is... A-10 Cuba meets *Pilotwings*. Yes, it's true: there are no guns in *Plane Crazy*, but the feel of the game more than makes up for it.

back on the throttle, Andrew demonstrates how the planes can be flown to a fraction above stalling speed, allowing access to hidden power-ups which have been put there to encourage players to explore the lower depths of the course



in search of secrets and short cuts. Considering that there aren't any plans to incorporate weapons in the *Plane Crazy* melting pot at present, I asked if Andrew would be so kind as to reveal the secret 'all weapons' cheat to me.

"There are no weapons."

Yeah, right! And I grow marrows in my window box.

"They're currently a secret."

So who's *Plane Crazy* going to be aimed at?

"It's age-range 14 and above."

Will there be pumping techno in the background, or sedate pan pipe music sending us to sleep?

"We don't exactly have 'pumping techno', but I suppose you could describe the soundtrack as 'Ennio Morricone on speed'. It's a game for the racing fan and the music will certainly reflect that."

Direct3D is good

Graphically, everything seems to be coming together very well. *Plane Crazy's* 3D engine utilises Microsoft's Direct3D, in conjunction with the latest in 3D acceleration, to marvellous effect – misting, Gouraud shading, highly detailed texture-mapping and Z-buffering are all called upon to enhance the racing environment. I asked Andrew how his programmers had found working with the infamous Direct3D to come up

"Using Microsoft's DirectPlay we could have arcade players taking on people in their homes" – Andrew Walker

with these effects.

"They've actually found it to be very good. It's a very consistent, well thought-out, logical way of doing things. As a programmer I'll admit that it can look a bit messy if you look at the code, but it's an extremely powerful piece of

Product details

Developer: Inner Workings

Publisher: TBA

Website: <http://www.innerworkings.co.uk>

Release Date: November



Andrew Walker – head of games development at Inner Workings.

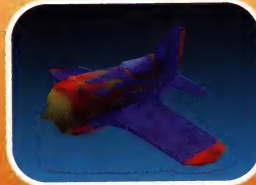
Like a train with no brakes

That's how fast these planes 'go'. Like a greyhound après dump. They're fast. They're compact. Girls think they're 'cute'. Blokes like to think they can pull birds in them.

Based on super-fast 'pylon racing' models, *Plane Crazy's* array of racing machines differ in performance and handling, as you'd expect in a game of this kind. The finished home version of *Plane Crazy* will even allow

customisation of the physics and textures in the game – players will be able to create their very own brand new planes to suit their own requirements using the built-in editing software.

If Inner Workings decide to make the plane files small enough to be swappable via the Internet, there may be call for an on-line 'Farnborough Airshow' at some point in the future...





software. Direct3D will give our highly optimised in-house 3D engine the flexibility it needs in supporting all the major accelerator cards."

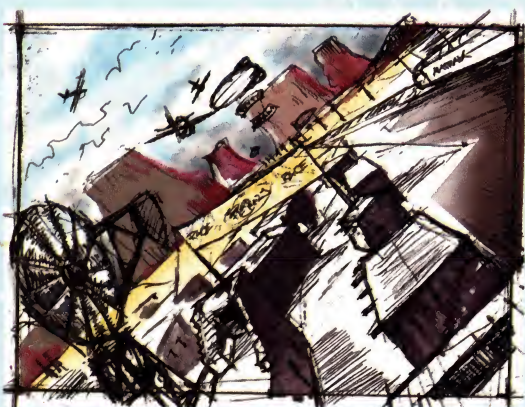
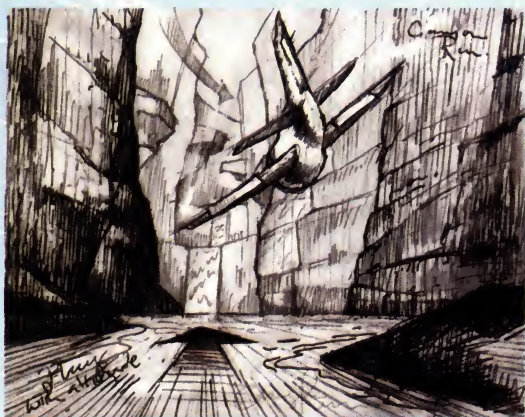
How will *Plane Crazy* look in its unaccelerated state?

"We're working on a rasterised version and an MMX version, both of which will move pretty quickly, although obviously there'll be some compromise graphically."

And what kind of minimum spec are you recommending?

"We're recommending a P133, but it'll run on any Pentium."

Inner Workings' involvement in the PublicPC initiative has also introduced other Microsoft standards into their coding. DirectSound (for three-dimensional sound) and DirectInput (which also includes force feedback support) are being put to full use in *Plane Crazy*, but most interesting of all is how DirectPlay (Microsoft's multi-player standard, which includes Internet support) is being employed. As Andrew Walker explained: "Using Microsoft's DirectPlay makes it very easy to have arcade-style link-up with not just adjacent cabinets in the arcade, but with individual cabinets playing over the Internet. Operators could then organise tournaments where



More sketches showing early ideas for *Plane Crazy*. There'll be three levels in arcades, and five in homes.

You're in the arcades now

Microsoft's PublicPC initiative kicks off during the summer of this year, and *Plane Crazy* will be one of the first games to be played in an arcade on what is basically nothing more than a souped-up PC.

The initiative itself encourages the adoption by the coin-op industry of high-powered PCs, running accelerated games under Windows 95. Of course we're talking 'proper cabinet set-ups', not 'desktop PCs in a room with a sinister old man trying to get your trousers down by filling your pockets with coins from his "Change" booth'.

Many of the games chosen for Microsoft's initiative will also go on to become showcase titles for 3D accelerator cards, which will be no bad thing for gamers if it serves to drive support up and prices down.

the players in one branch could take on the players in another. It doesn't need to stop there either – we could have arcade players taking on people in their homes."

Sounds pretty ambitious. Were there plans to try this out in the near future?

"Oh yeah – that's very much part of it."

So Inner Workings are certainly thinking big on the multi-player front.

Bloody Yanks

"*Plane Crazy* is simple to pick up, but really hard to master," comments Andrew as I show my mastery of gaming to the assembled press who pay witness to a *Plane Crazy* expert in the making.

How complete is the version we were playing?

"About 30 per cent complete."

But the code seemed completely stable – 30 per cent complete and no crashes?

"The engine's complete. It's the courses we're working on."

All of the courses and textures are being designed using SG workstations running Alias, Wavefront and Power Animator, which are then ported over to the PC for high quality results. When the tracks are completed, *Plane Crazy* will offer a variety of racing formats – in a single race against others, or over three courses in 'The Ultimate Challenge'.

Arcade players in the US will no doubt get the chance to play the finished *Plane Crazy* before we even get a sniff of it, and a publisher for the UK home version has yet to be announced. Inner Workings say they are currently considering publishers (which just shows how confident they are), and expect to make their decision public in the very near future. And I'll be there, with my big rubber 'arcade perfect' stamp, when it happens. **2**



See these planes here? They've been modelled on Silicon Graphics workstations they have. Now isn't that clever?

Two degrees of Kevin Bacon



"Dere ain't notin' dere, is dere?" Pesci took great delight in pointing out the lack of textures in this *Plane Crazy* shot which he'd seen on my monitor. "Dat's 'cos it's a fock'n pre-production wireframe," I pointed out to him, very politely I thought.



"Hey – dat's real nice." It was Pesci again, commenting on a more advanced shot he'd just eyeballed on my screen. "Don'tcha know any fock'n thing?" I said. "Dis is da tree dee eff ex voishon!" So he stabbed me in the eyes repeatedly with a pen.

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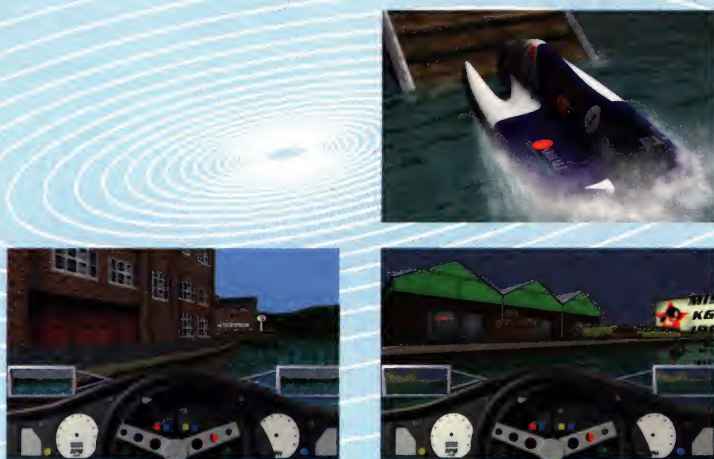
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(Clockwise from top left) Pulling a 'Donald Campbell'; a bit of hot ramping action; ooh, an empty warehouse – let's nick some videos; canal cruising, F1 style.

(Right) That rabbit isn't really there. You're losing your mind. Kill. Kill for Satan.



F1 POWERBOAT

Last time **Charlie Brooker** went on a boat he found himself unwittingly taking part in a three-day BBC Big Band Cruise. Thankfully, Promethean Design's forthcoming river racer features absolutely no Glenn Miller numbers at all.

W

HO SHALL HAVE A FISHY, ON THEIR little dishy, when the boat comes in? Promethean Design, that's who. Don't be surprised if you've never heard of them, because it's a name they've only recently adopted.

And don't be surprised if their previous moniker – East Point Software – is unfamiliar too, since for the last four years they've produced nothing but conversions of other people's products, including PC versions of Aladdin and The Lion King for Disney, and – shhh – a none-too-wonderful Mr Blobby game (if I'd been asked to do it, I'd have come up with a kind of beat 'em up in which you get to repeatedly stab the pink monstrosity with a broken beer bottle), alongside the occasional weird promo title (one of which was, bizarrely, written for Abbey National). Over this period they've garnered valuable experience and swelled in size – from a team of six to a mob of 24. Now they want to concentrate on producing original titles of their very own – hence the forthcoming release of F1 Powerboat.

It would be very easy to dismiss F1 Powerboat as simply another racing game, albeit one with an extremely waterlogged



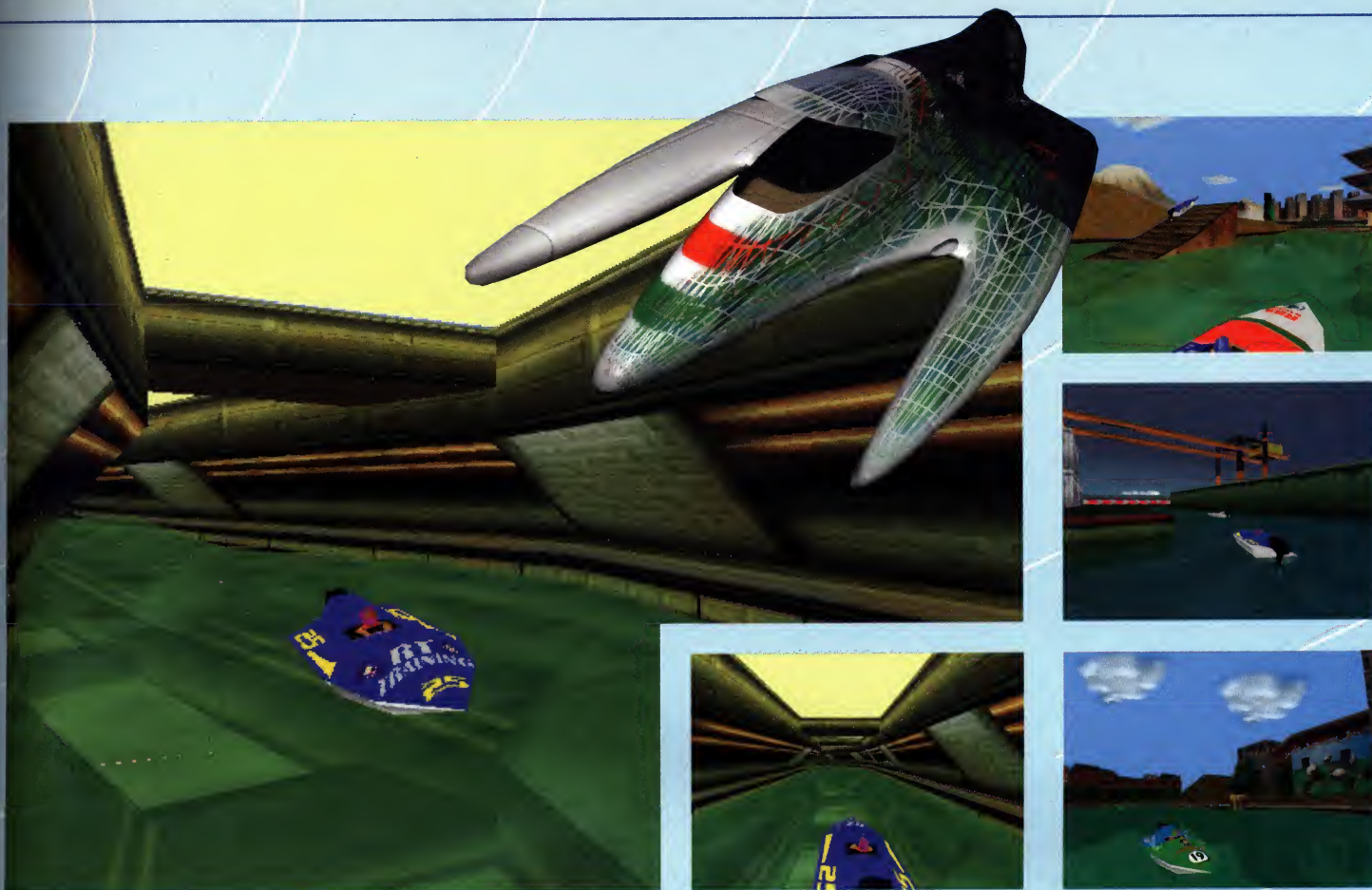
(Above) The environment you race in is about as 'real world' as you can get, with currents, wind and gravity all effecting your powerboat.



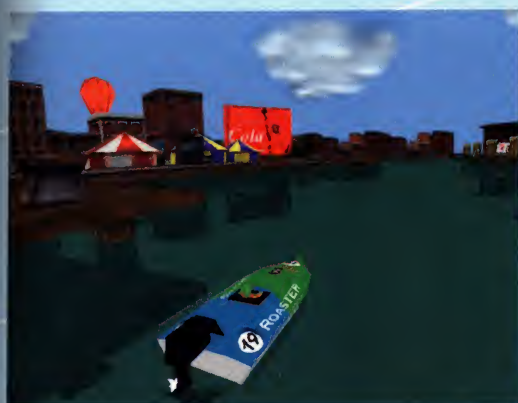
racetrack. Easy, that is, until you see it in action. Even at this unfinished stage, and without the assistance of a 3D accelerator card (all brands will be fully supported in the final code), it looks astonishingly good. The water, in particular, looks and moves just like the genuine article, with wonderfully realistic reflections and fluid, undulating waves being the order of the day. Better still, the boats really do seem to behave like boats. They don't have the appearance of mere objects stuck onto the surface of the river – they bob up and down, skip over the waves, dip underwater, just as you'd expect them to. If you're susceptible to sudden bouts of seasickness, you might as well stick your fingers down your throat now, because after five minutes with F1 Powerboat, your stomach muscles will be given the kind of workout that the manufacturers of Ab-Roller Plus (the only abdominal workout product that locks you on target) can only dream of. You'll puke so hard, it'll smash through your monitor and fill the damn thing to the brim, leaving you with a fizzling vomit

box squatting on your desktop like a television permanently tuned to Barf UK – the TV station where stomach waste is king. And you'd also have to contend with a sticky, sour-smelling keyboard too. Ergh.





(Top) Is it a powerboat or a Nintendo 64 joypad? (Above right) See that sky? That's a great big polygon, that is. (Above left) Alright, own up. Who pissed in the river? I really hope the boat doesn't tip over because a mouthful of stagnant urine is the last thing I need right now.



Sorry, where was I? Ah yes – Lowestoft. I was in Lowestoft, at Promethean's HQ, watching *F1 Powerboat* in action and bending the ear of Russell Ritchie – the leather-trousered founder of the company...

Let's talk boat

Why powerboats, then, eh?

Well, for starters, I'm quite into powerboats and I've always been into speedboats. I've had four or five boats, and I've been interested in them for years. I had my first boat when I was about 16. I like the speed, that's what it is.

Have you done much research?

Oh yeah. There's a place just down the river where they hold powerboat races. Also, the consultant on *F1 Powerboat* is a guy called Steve Clarke, who used to publish *Powerboat International*. He knows every single Formula 1 driver there is, he's taken hundreds of photographs... he's an expert.

What other games have been influential during the production of *F1 Powerboat*?

Well, everyone on the team is a dedicated gamer, so we know what games are out there. If anything's been influential, it would be mainly other race games. The idea for the game



(Left) The reflections really are cool. (Above) Plans are afoot to let the player design their own boat 'skins' which is probably a very good thing.

itself has been kicking around for about two and a half years, but until recently the technology to do it just wasn't there. We wanted to do a 3D engine, but we didn't want to make one that was just like everybody else's. So we drew up a list of the things that weren't being done – like proper shadows, reflections, and real water physics. And we decided that this was where we were going to set our goals.

Is this an arcade game, or a realistic simulation?

It's fun to play, but it's also very realistic. For example, boats have 'power trim'. When you go along a straight, you trim the engine up slightly which lifts the boat out of the water and gives you more speed. That's when you're in danger of flipping. When you first start playing the game, you'll just have a throttle. Later on, you can start using the power trim, which requires more skill. Apart from flipping, if you don't trim down when you come to a corner, you're just going to slide off and crash into your opponents or into the riverbank.

That's one example. There's also real water physics to contend with, which really haven't been done before. When it's all finished you'll have the boat skipping and doing weird

"You'll be able to see aeroplanes passing overhead before plunging back underwater." – Russell Ritchie

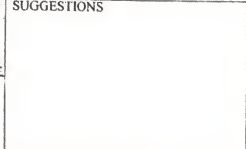
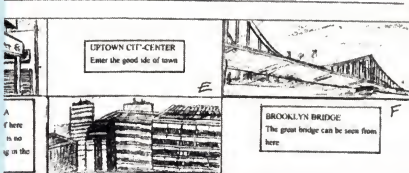
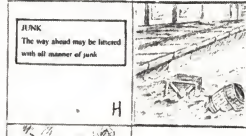
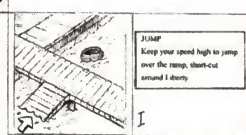
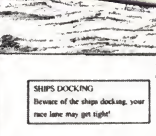
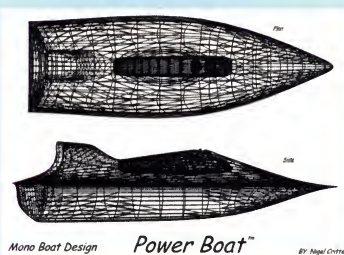
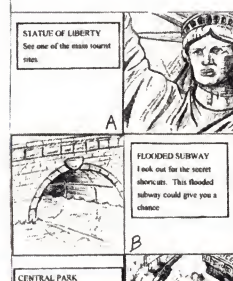
and wonderful things off the waves. Also, we've recently put wind in the engine. If there's an object in the water, and it's got a certain area, the wind will blow it around, and it'll get stuck until the wind changes again, or whatever.

What other unique features are there?

We don't know of another 3D game where you can be partially submerged – your view can be split by the water margin; you can see above and below simultaneously. The reason we insisted on that is that when you take a jump,



TRACK NAME NEW YORK
COURSE DIFF
ARTIST NAME
LAP TIME
CIRCUIT NO.



(Above right) The team have spent plenty of time on each track in an effort to cram the game full of as many surprises and 'easter eggs' as possible. Here's one of the preliminary sketches for the New York course, looking eerily similar to a Hollywood movie storyboard. You can't accuse them of lazy, inattentive design.

as you land you'll bob under the water for a moment, just as a boat does. One thing I think we've definitely achieved here is that we wanted these boats to look like they really were in the water. The reflections and shadows have really helped us there. We're still in the process of tweaking the buoyancy in order to get it spot on. It certainly looks pretty...

Oh yeah. We've got different levels of transparency, we've got fogging effects, night-time levels... we've even used a polygon sky. If you look at things like, say, *Porsche Challenge* on the PlayStation, they've used a beautiful backdrop which looks absolutely incredible. Trouble is, if you're going to start banking and rolling - as powerboats do when they turn corners - it all turns to shit. It's also essential for when a boat does a 360 degree flip. With this engine, you'll be able to see aeroplanes passing overhead as you spin through the air, before plunging back underwater when you land.

It runs in hi-res (640x480) and it's going to support Direct3D and all the accelerator cards. There's no warping of textures. And there's lots going on. There's ducks, swimmers, tractors at the side of the course... all sorts.

How many tracks are there?

At the moment there's nine, but we're hoping to get ten in.

Are they quite linear, or will there be secret short cuts?

Well, in just about every race game available now, you're on a road, and you pass things, and that's more or less it. What we're aiming for is more participation from the driver. There are lots of things you can do to screw up your opponents.

What kind of things?

Well, take the Russian course for example. (He loads it up to illustrate his point.) Now, let's say you're in a five-lap race, okay? As you come round this corner there's a boat floating in front of this sewage pipe here - which is a potential short cut with a jump at the end. Right now it's blocked by the boat. But over here there's a crane, holding a container which is hanging over the water. Now, down here is the cab for that crane, which you can clip with your boat. Hit it once, and you

Tired and emotional

Hours later, in a Norwich nightclub, following many drinks and a very good meal indeed (all of which craven pampering naturally fails to dent *PC Zone's* legendary impartiality) Russell is explaining how proud he is of the work of the *Powerboat* team. His exact words elude me, but the upshot of it is something along the lines of "I love those guys", but a little more slurred.

So pleased is he with their work, he would like to see them getting as much recognition as possible.

He'd like to see a photo of the entire team

printed alongside this article. Russell himself isn't in the picture; indeed, he goes on to say that he'd prefer it if the feature as a whole concentrated upon the programming team rather than himself.

"Because they're the real stars," he says, and for a moment I think he's going to start blubbing. Stars or not, on the evidence of what I've seen so far, *Powerboat* looks

certain to improve their

reputation. Overnight. Dramatically. Keep your eyes on the pages of this magazine to witness a full review as soon as possible.



Product details

Developer: Promethean Design

Publisher: Interplay

Website: www.interplay.com

Release Date: September '97

crack the glass in the windows. Hit it again and the glass cracks a little more. Hit it a third time, on your third lap, and the container drops, lands in the water, and immediately adopts real-world physics and floating attributes. It starts to float downstream, so you never know where that obstacle will be on the water.

When that happens, the boat blocking the pipe entrance moves away, giving you a chance to take the short cut - but you have to be quick because eventually the container will float right round the corner and block the pipe at the other end.

That's just one example of the kind of secret features we've replicated in all of the tracks. **Z**

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EXTREME ASSAULT



With a game title like that we've got to get someone extremely violent to write this preview. Hang on a minute, doesn't **Chris Anderson** support Chelsea?

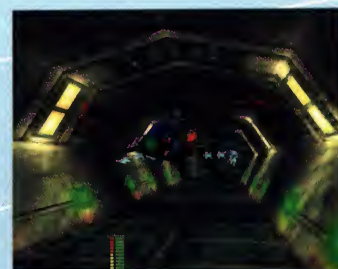
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HERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE TO GET OFF my chest before I get any further into this preview. It concerns 3Dfx, PowerVR and every other graphic accelerator out there at the moment (there is a link here, so please bear with me). We've all marvelled at the stunning visuals in 3Dfx versions of F1 from Psygnosis and Tomb Raider from EIDOS to Quake from the idmeisters. We've seen the fantastic-looking Ultimate Race for PowerVR, but then we've also seen Die Hard Trilogy looking totally abysmal and running at a snail's pace when unaccelerated, only to

be transformed into a good-looking and perfectly playable bloodfest under Direct3D courtesy of the Matrox Mystique. And this is where my problem lies. How do all these games perform without the help of the 3D wonderchips?

Well, I've seen them all, so let me enlighten you. They look awful. They jerk all over the shop. Basically, you're back to where you were with 3D games before the graphic card explosion started to ignite. I might be wrong, but it seems that when software houses get their games looking so hot on the 3D card of their choice, they're less inclined to put any effort into optimising the unaccelerated version. So what if you haven't got a 3D graphics card? Blue Byte have the answer to that one right here: you play *Extreme Assault*. Take a look at the screenshots on these pages and tell me this game doesn't look absolutely gorgeous. And wait till you see it running. It looks so smooth you'll swear blind that it *must* be using some kind of acceleration. In terms of gameplay, it's basically a 3D helicopter shoot 'em up with sub-levels in ▶

Later levels put you in control of an assault tank, so in effect you could say *Extreme Assault* gives you two games for the price of one.



Extreme Assault's got the lot: gorgeous graphics, atmospheric backgrounds and stunning lighting effects. Who needs 3Dfx, eh?



(Far left) The Blue Byte team. (Left) Erik Simon is the man responsible for the inventive level design in *Extreme Assault*.

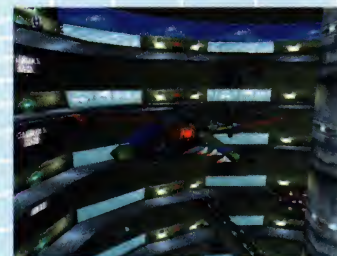
Product details

Developer: Blue Byte

Publisher: Blue Byte

Website: <http://www.bluebyte.com>

Release Date: July



State of the art shoot 'em up action. *Desert Strike*, anyone? No, I didn't think so somehow.



(Above) Intricately detailed helicopters like this don't appear overnight you know.

◀ which you zoom around the place in a tank. We obviously can't vouch for the gameplay until we get the review copy of the game in, but we can assure you that everyone in the office has been completely blown away by the visuals.

So how did Blue Byte go about creating this gorgeous blastfest without the help of 3D acceleration? Erik Simon, game and level designer on *Extreme Assault*, puts it all down to clever programming. "Christian Jungen is one of the programmers on *Extreme Assault* and he's very much into optimised assembler routines. This is quite unusual nowadays, as most developers write their game engines in C. The fact we've written our engine in Assembler is partly what makes *Extreme* so fast. We also used highly optimised texture-mapping routines, and Christian has many programming tricks up his sleeve that he uses to speed up the code."

Games by gamers, for gamers

Speed issues aside, in the light of the recently released *Archimedean Dynasty* from Blue Byte (an underwater shoot 'em up) and now *Extreme Assault*, it would seem that the German developers have slightly changed tact, as most PC gamers will associate them with strategy classics such as the *Battle Isle* and *Settlers* series. Christian says this is not the case. "That's not how we do things at Blue Byte," he maintains. "There was no internal decision to move away from the strategy genre. We're a games company first and foremost and if someone on the team comes up with a game idea, we're happy to listen, whatever genre their game falls into."

"In this case, Rainer Reber, our main programmer, and Janos Toth, one of our graphic artists, decided they wanted to do a 3D shoot 'em up. It's a genre they're really into and they felt they could produce something special. They sat down, put their ideas on paper and then took them to our boss, Thomas Friedmann. Thomas believed their enthusiasm would carry the project, so he decided to do it."

In fact, Thomas is producer on *Extreme Assault*, and is just as enthusiastic about it as the rest of the team. "We wanted two things from *Extreme Assault*. First, we wanted a very high-end shoot 'em up with mind-blowing action. It's important to stress that we were never attempting to make a simulation of any description; our focus was entirely on action, pure and simple. Second, we wanted a game with graphics that would amaze everyone who saw them. We think we've achieved both these things and hope the games-playing public agree when the game comes out."

Original sin?

I don't think anyone will be arguing with Thomas there, but one thing did cross my mind when I saw the game in action. Even though it undoubtedly looks fast and impressive, and I'll be one of the first queuing up to play it when it comes in, it's not exactly, er, original (cough). I threw this tricky little number in Erik's direction. "No, it's not terribly original," he concedes. "But that was never our design goal. We wanted

a shoot 'em up that was both

eminently playable and structured differently to other 3D blasters, in as much as the levels and sub-levels gave the player a feeling of freedom that until now has been missing in a game such as this.

"I'm a bit of a perfectionist, so I'm not normally entirely satisfied with most of the projects I work on, but as regards *Extreme Assault*, I'm really pleased with the graphics, and the mission design has come together exactly the way we thought it would. It would be nice to create something completely original, but at the end of the day *Extreme Assault* is great fun to play – and you can't say even that about most PC games."

And on that bombshell, we'll leave you to drool over the screenshots with the promise of a full glorious review in the next issue. **Z**



Here we have the three different ways you can play *Extreme Assault*, starting with (above left) the helicopter cockpit view, followed by (centre) the 'kill people with your tank view' and (above right) the external 'arcade' view of your chopper.

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BROKEN SWORD II: THE SMOKING MIRROR

The first adventure game that **Paul Presley** ever completed was actually written by the MD of Revolution Software. Pointless trivia perhaps, but it helps to pad out these things when the brain juice is running low.



THAT'S RIGHT, THE MD HIMSELF, Charles Cecil is showing me a few of the e-mails and letters that were sent to him from around the world following the release of *Broken Sword* last year.

"Warm greetings from The Netherlands! I have never, ever, written a compliment to a software company about a game before in my life, but in this case, I'll make an exception! This is truly the best adventure game I've ever played in my entire career as a gamer!"

"I bought your game, my first and only game for my PC. I'm addicted! Tonight I finished the game and am at a loss, I want the game to go on forever! This is really a terrific game and I've enjoyed it tremendously! I don't know how any other game will be able to beat it."

"I can't remember the last time I laughed aloud while sitting in front of my computer, but this game managed to draw wholehearted laughter from me several times, along with a lot of minor chuckling."

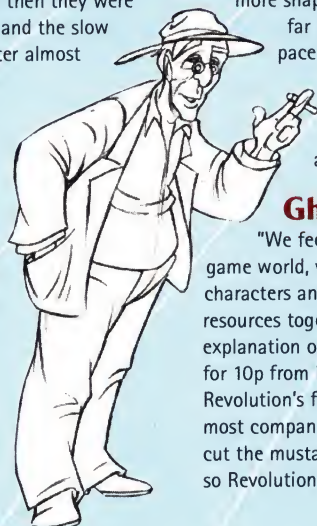
I'd swear that the Managing Director of Revolution Software had written them himself if it wasn't for two things – the amusingly broken pigeon English and the fact that one of them actually came with a photo. Didn't anyone have anything negative to say about the game?

"I'm from Greece and I purchased *Broken Sword* two days ago... There are no words to say about this product... It's the best game-adventure I've ever played. Congratulations to you and to anyone who worked for this Great Great Great Great Great Great Great Great game!"

To be honest, the only negative comments I can remember came from *PC Zone*'s own review, and even then they were just minor criticisms about lengthy speech and the slow pace of the game. So I've come to York (after almost getting on a train to Hull, Revolution's old base of operations, by mistake), partly to see if they're still miffed at us, but mostly to see what sort of things are on offer in the sequel, *Broken Sword II – The Smoking Mirror*.

Cheddar George

Revolution Software have been producing adventure games for over five years now (Charles himself has been penning them since the earliest days of the Sinclair Spectrum – remember the *Adventure A, B, C, D and E* series? No, you're probably too young), but it was only with last year's story of the Knights



George and Nico return for the sequel and as usual have all manner of understated 'will-they-won't-they' sexual tension. The characters start life as hand-drawn animations before they are scanned, coloured and given little computer brains that are programmed to make life hard for George.

Templar and grubby handkerchiefs that they really hit the beaches of international fame and put their towels over the deckchairs of global popularity.

As Charles gives me a tour of their surprisingly calm and oddly dark offices I spot what looks like a scene from the first game, the little café outside the church, on one of the artists' monitors. "This is the only screen that appears twice," Charles assures me. "There are a couple of characters and just the one screen that came over from the first game. It's nice to have a bit of continuity but I think it would be a complete con to use all the same characters and locations. It's nice to have a couple of references that people might recognise though."

This time round, George Stobbard finds himself lost in a world of Mayan mythology, sinister cocaine smugglers and the small matter of preventing the entire world from being destroyed by the Lord of Darkness. Which is nice of him.

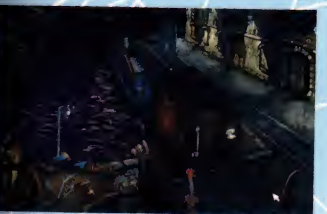
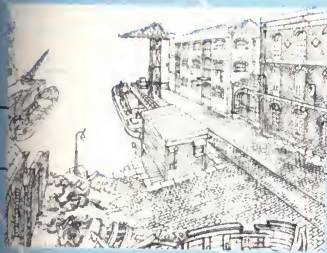
You may have noticed that this sounds somewhat darker and more gritty than *Broken Sword* and you'd be right. Despite the EEC-controlled praise mountains that swamped them, Revolution have gone to pains to address even the few niggles that we had with it. Consequently *Broken Sword II* is designed to be more action-orientated, less 'talky' and more snappy. There's far more to 'do' in the sequel and far less to 'say'. This helps to up the dramatic pace and keep things much more interesting as the player wanders the streets of Paris and London, rescuing his beloved Nico, fending off poisonous spiders and discovering ancient artifacts.

Ghosts of the past

"We feel that to create a really believable and exciting game world, you really need to keep close control over your characters and the only way to do that is to keep all your resources together." The brief tour complete (including an explanation of why one of the programmers has a cheque for 10p from Littlewoods on his desk), Charles demonstrates Revolution's fully integrated programming system. As with most companies these days, existing software packages didn't cut the mustard as far as their overall need was concerned, so Revolution built their own systems.



(Top) Dynamic characters are a feature pretty unique to Revolution Software. The dog, for example, follows George from one screen to the next, blocking his access and behaving independently of the player's actions. (Middle) George effects an entry via the tradesman's back passage. (Is that the best you can do? – Ed) Probably.



(Top) It was around this time that George's game of musical chairs took on a nasty turn. (Main) George's reputation for outright bravery in the face of danger is safely maintained for the sequel. (Above right) Known for his desire to be in the thick of the action, George mooches around the café in search of a large cappuccino with extra froth.

The backgrounds are layered in the traditional cartoon manner. First a rough layout, then the foreground and main action areas are painted, then the background detail is added and finally the sprites and interactive objects.

"Do you recognise this?" Charles asks as a page of IFs, ANDs, ORs and THEN commands appears. It looks like C++ to me, but then so does every programming language. Besides, he's pointing to a logo at the top of the screen and not the command lines. It looks a bit like the computer network system from *Beneath A Steel Sky*. "That's right," he grins. It turns out they've expanded the old programmers' joke of having their PC say, "What are you doing, Dave?" in a HAL 9000 voice on start-up and modelled their entire programming system around one of their earlier games. I change the subject before he asks me to spot more references to older games that thanks to hours of brain-numbing television I can barely recollect. So how comprehensive is the system?

"We have a complete list of character routines on view and next to that, if we go into one of the locations for example," Charles opens a folder belonging to one of the Caribbean scenes that was being worked on in the next cubicle, "you can look at all the logic routines that go on in that scene. Plus you can list all the sprites and what states they're in, or you can just look at the sprites." He shows me one of the graphic routines belonging to one of the sprites in this location. It's a simple animation – a humanoid figure walking from one point to another – but because it's all running in

little more than a window within their programming software it shows that at any time the programmers can check on a piece of animation, a sound sample or so on and see exactly what state it's currently in, how it will appear in the actual game and how recent additions to the code will affect it.

"It means that we can keep really tight control of what's going on because if there's one thing that I think we take a lot more seriously than our competitors, it's this idea of really making our world real. Others might go for 'slapstick' games, and that's their area – good luck to them.

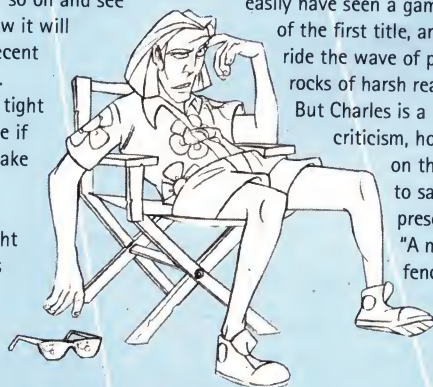
We've chosen not to go that way and there aren't many people that are really competing with the kind of adventures that we write. Sure ours are humorous, but we're trying to create a real world rather than just a purely funny one."

Thundercats NO!!!

We've moved across the office and I'm looking at some of the storyboards for the opening animation sequence. I can't help but think of Disney and Don Bluth. "What we've tried to do is get over the hand-drawn look but then also use textures and computer effects to get a kind of hybrid feeling overall. It's pretty unique." I'm taken to a large scanning machine swamped by stacks of paper covered in animation cells. So much for the paperless society, I think as Charles explains that the animation is done in the traditional manner before it ever reaches a computer. "We had to look long and hard at the best studios, most of whom were used to doing Saturday morning cartoon shows, which isn't good enough for our needs. You'll watch cartoons and accept things that you won't in a game. Our quality control as far as animation is concerned is a lot higher than anything in cartoons. Take backgrounds for instance. In a cartoon you'll see a background for a few seconds whereas here you might be looking at it for several minutes at a time so it has to be of a much higher quality."

Which seems to be the recurring theme here. Higher quality. For most people, it would be hard for Revolution to top *Broken Sword*, as their fan mail attests to. We could easily have seen a game which was little more than a rehash of the first title, an attempt to rest on their laurels and ride the wave of popularity, not caring for the jagged rocks of harsh reality waiting for them on the shore.

But Charles is a man that listens to constructive criticism, however rare it might be. He has an eye on the future and as my grandmother used to say before Sunnyvale Castles started prescribing Valium in large quantities, "A man who looks to the fore spots the fence. A man who looks to the rear trips in the cowshit." She knew her eggs, my nan. **Z**



(Top) There's a pirate software joke in here somewhere but I can't quite put my finger on it... (Bottom) Cartoons are funneee. Hur...

Product details

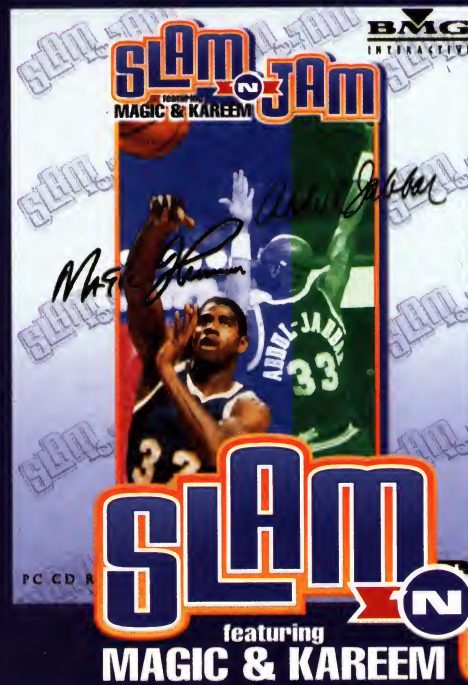
Developer: Revolution Software
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Website: <http://www.vie.co.uk>
Release Date: September

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(Top left) Some of the more advanced vehicles in the game look as though they should be in an episode of *Wacky Races* if you ask me. (Bottom left) And yet somehow, his car radio still gets nicked when he parks in Manchester. (Main) Crisp hi-res graphics mean that you get to see a lot more on-screen while character/object detailing remains high.

DARK REIGN

Another C&C-style game called 'Dark Something'. Paul Presley is starting to get confused.

7 SWEAR THEY'RE TAKING THE PISS. DARK Reign? Dark. Rain. They're from bloody Australia and they know they're pitching at a British market yet they name their game after a climate condition that we possess in unwanted abundance and they are blissfully short of. No wonder we hate them.

Truth be told, *Dark Reign* isn't wholly Australian. The game's engine comes from a company called Auran who are based in the culturally rich land of *Mad Max*, *Neighbours* and, er, *Yahoo Serious*. Activision themselves actually designed the game around it, so perhaps the name is their fault. Pity, now I'm on speaking terms with the French I could do with another country to sever relations with.

The hills are alive...

It won't surprise anyone to learn that it's another *Command & Conquer* style game. It seems that anything with the word 'Dark' in the title is legally bound to be a C&C clone. What Activision are hoping will surprise people is the impressive list of advanced features.

Producer Josh Resnick boasts: "Like *WarCraft II* and *Command & Conquer*, *Dark Reign* is played on a scrolling map and allows the player to select the units he wants to build and then deploy them against enemy targets. We are convinced, however, that we have far exceeded the standards set by those games in almost every way. One of the first things you'll notice is that we have included real altitude and line of sight considerations. The height and grade of a particular hill, for instance, will affect the speed at which it



can be traversed by a given unit, as well as how far over the hill that unit can see (if it can see over it at all. Entire armoured columns can be hidden in the shadows of ridges, waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting enemy)."

Different terrain types also play a big part in each game. Mud, ice, lava, forests and volcanoes all go towards affecting your strategies. Movement rates, visibility, durability - everything has to be considered when you send your forces out. Taking the land for granted is no longer an option.

Here's one I made earlier

Creating land is a different matter though. "We've had so much fun creating our maps and missions that we decided to let game players in on the fun," says Josh. "*Dark Reign* offers a sophisticated yet easy to use construction kit that will allow you to make up your own maps and missions, making truly unlimited gameplay possibilities a reality."

The editor lets you play Capability Brown with every aspect of map designing, giving you a wealth of preset graphics with which to "create rolling hillsides, litter the landscape with rocks, trees and buildings and build up thick forests of alien trees or desolate plains of craters and debris. Create mud bogs, rivers, smouldering lava pits, rock-faced canyons - almost anything you can dream up. And it's easy to use. To create a hill, just select the elevation you want from the menu and click and scroll across the map. The same ridge that took ten minutes to render with the maddening, puzzle-piece *Red Alert* map editor you can create with the *Dark Reign* construction kit in ten seconds! No kidding."

It's not just the terrain that can be sculpted with the editor though. The whole game is fully customisable. Units can have their individual values adjusted to suit either your needs or the needs of the terrain. Full missions can be constructed, with all the artificial intelligence characteristics for the computer opponent moulded to suit your tastes. Which is handy if you happen to know the psychological make-up of your friends as it means you can program an opponent to really prey on his weaknesses.

(Above) The allegedly easy to use level editor should give the game a much needed advantage over the zillion other C&C clones out there.





These screens show how the game has evolved over the past few months. The two on the left are from an older version – before the control panels were enhanced and the terrain effects were improved. The developers maintain that this, along with their advanced AI, will be more than enough to make *Dark Reign* stand out.



Weapons, buildings and vehicles can all be upgraded as each game progresses, ensuring that you can stay one step ahead of your enemy. Aerial weapons are useful for laying down covering fire, bombing enemy installations or, in this case, doubling as a handy salad slicer and dicer. Thanks to the advanced AI routines of your troops, you can issue your orders and then rely on your forces to take care of themselves rather than needing you to constantly keep an eye on everything.

Speaking of which...

"The thing about which we think gamers will be most enthusiastic is *Dark Reign's* highly developed artificial intelligence," enthuses Josh. "Not only will you find your computer opponents more wily and cunning than they ever were in *Red Alert* and *WarCraft II*, but as a game player you will be able to determine the behaviour of each of your units through a simple interface. You'll be able to set your units' damage tolerance levels, giving them instructions to find a medic after they have endured a player-determined amount of damage or to stay and fight to the death." Think of the 'attitude' bars in *Syndicate* and you'll get the basic idea. These do sound somewhat more advanced though.

You can also issue flight sim-style waypoints to your troops, assigning different actions to different areas. Units can patrol certain areas, reacting if they're provoked. They can conduct sneaky hit and run attacks on outposts, buildings or enemy units. They can even actively seek out and destroy particular targets depending on your strategic need.

At last – artificially intelligent soldiers that don't defy the Trade Descriptions Act. It's about time.

I have in my hand...

So how did Activision stumble across what appears to be the Holy Grail of strategy engines? Don't they just do games with big robots in? Josh takes up the story: "Both the development teams here and in Australia are communities of rabid real-time strategy gamers who have logged hundreds of hours playing games from the

WarCraft and *C&C* universes, as well as others. We all enjoy the fast-paced action paired with the strategic and tactical thinking that are essential to winning. A number of other companies have seen the success of these types of games and embarked on attempts to clone them and get their foot into the strategy game market, but few of these have offered any real innovation in functionality and gameplay.

"Then along came Auran with a magnificent new engine that stirred the imaginations of our designers. Maps were no longer merely backgrounds but actual playing environments that possessed real properties that actively affected gameplay. Computer opponents were no longer simply mindless drones sending their pre-determined assortment of units at you in X spot at X time, but were now challenging adversaries who actually adjusted to your tactics and style of play. A map editor was no longer a tacked-on afterthought but rather a powerful 'construction kit' that could allow a gamer to build his own gameplaying universe in whatever way he saw fit. Suddenly it seemed that a huge percentage of the hopes from every strategy gamer's wish list could be realised."

At this point I swear I can almost hear the faint stirring strains of *Land Of Hope And Glory* in the background. "On the platform of these new possibilities we have built a robust, challenging game with a gripping storyline, engorged musical score, and a beautifully detailed, fully immersive playing environment."

Josh sounds convinced that *Dark Reign* is something truly special. It certainly sounds like it. **Z**



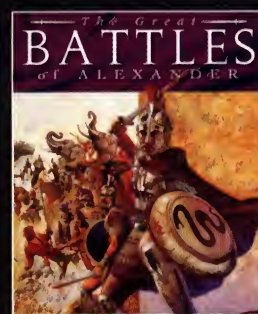
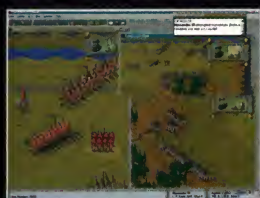
When a picnic gets nasty.

Product details

Developer: Auran/Activision
Publisher: Activision
Website: www.activision.co.uk
Release Date: June/July

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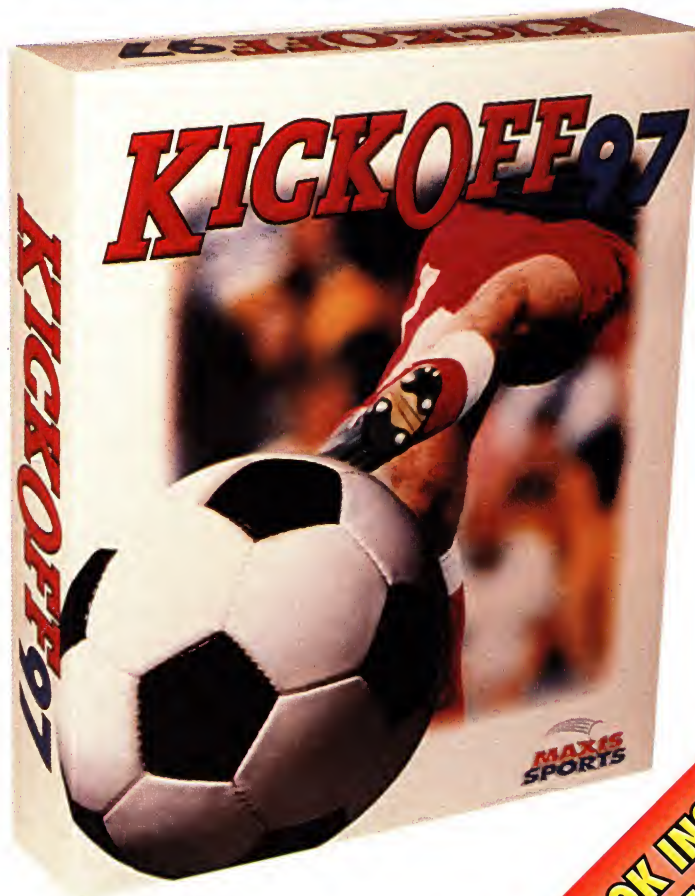
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Would you believe it, not a rotatemy bitmap nor a textured jibbledy-jobbledy in sight, yet eight out of ten people (who expressed a preference) didn't actually give a toss.

F/A-18 HORNET

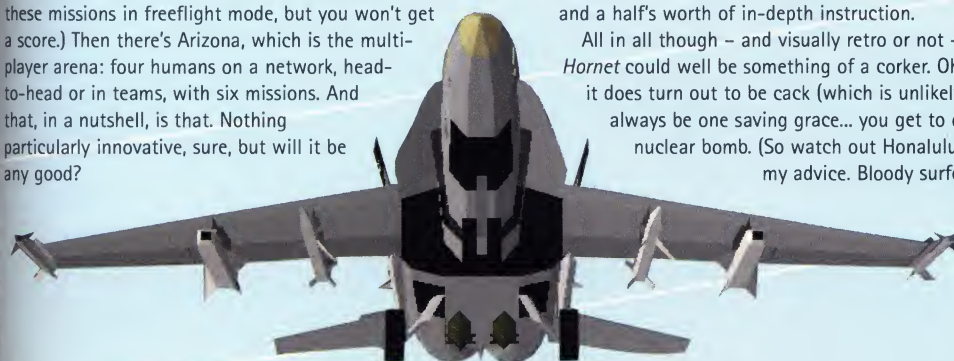
Duncan MacDonald, when given this flight sim to preview, thought it was called 'F/A-18 Hair-net', causing much merriment and hilarity (not).

DKAY, SO THIS GAME'S CALLED F/A-18 Hornet, not Hair-net. A silly mistake. Nevertheless, I still reckon they've got it wrong, because a better name for the game to my way of thinking – and sticking to the insect theme – would be F/A-18 Mayfly. Why Mayfly? Simple: it takes about 24 hours to work out what's going on, and then you die on your maiden flight anyway.

Yup, if you like your sims complicated, things are looking good already. Let me put it like this: guess how many different key-presses are involved? Well, I've just counted them as it happens, and the answer is 134. Blimey, eh? Knock out those keys involved solely with the simulation environment (such as the views and what have you) and you're still left with 97. Count 'em, 97! But enough of that. This is a preview rather than a review, so I'll hit you with the game structure instead.

Yawn...

Yes, I know, but some people want to know this stuff. Right, there are three main environments. First is Hawaii, the training ground, where you'll find yourself up against drone aircraft and the like. It's homework time, as you get to grips with the multiple radar modes and so forth. (Even the autopilot has five modes, not unlike a Tornado.) Next up is the main event, which is set over the Middle East. There are to be 36 combat missions, and you'll get medals and promotions as you progress, which probably won't come as a great surprise. (Incidentally, you can practice these missions in freeflight mode, but you won't get a score.) Then there's Arizona, which is the multi-player arena: four humans on a network, head-to-head or in teams, with six missions. And that, in a nutshell, is that. Nothing particularly innovative, sure, but will it be any good?



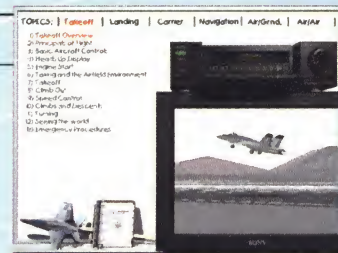
It's a Mac game...

As we all know, Macs don't make the greatest gaming platforms, and so Mac flight sims have always tended to shy away from texture-mapping and that sort of malarkey. They do, however, go in for hi-definition, mega-crisp polygon detail. Port this over to a PC and you get something of a culture shock. Did you get to see *A-10 Cuba*, which we reviewed a few issues ago? That was a Mac game as well, and personally I loved it. Okay, so there was no real campaign structure, and yes, most of the weapons were a bastard to use, but the plane flew like a dream. You could see for a squillion miles, you got a superb sense of speed and altitude, and there were some spiffy weird bits. Tim (PC Zone Group Publisher) reckons I'm talking a load of arse... but as the theme tune from *Different Strokes* put it: "The world don't move to the beat of just one drum...". Horses for courses. Still, the point I'm about to make is that while *F/A-18 Hornet* pulls pretty much the same strings as *A-10 Cuba*, it also includes all the campaign gubbins which are (unfortunately in my opinion) de rigueur in the modern

Visually retro or not, F/A-18 Hornet could well turn out to be a corker.

PC gaming market. Oh, and there's a well thought-out training classroom on the CD too, with about an hour and a half's worth of in-depth instruction.

All in all though – and visually retro or not – *F/A-18 Hornet* could well be something of a corker. Oh, and even if it does turn out to be cack (which is unlikely) there'll always be one saving grace... you get to drop a nuclear bomb. (So watch out Honolulu would be my advice. Bloody surfers.) **Z**



(Top) Boring but relevant caption time... you'll even be able to taxi around the carrier's deck (including, er, off the edge and into the sea). (Middle) Bob was so busy trying to work out which radar mode he was in that he... well, guess! (Bottom) The rather fab tutorial bit. It looks like it's going to be absurdly accessible. Top!



Product details

Developer: Graphics Simulation Corps
Publisher: Empire Interactive
Website: www.empire.co.uk
Release Date: July



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THE TONE REBELLION

In this age of a zillion C&C clones, it's refreshing to see that at least one developer is striving to produce an original real-time strategy game.

Jeremy Wells went to investigate.



(Above) Graphically, there's little that can touch *Tone* as far as strategy games go. Let's hope it plays well as good as it looks.

Of course, as everyone knows, flash presentation and humsome tunes do not make a good game. You need a compelling storyline, a competent AI, a variety of scenarios and the option to go 'mano a mano' with a chum or two. Todd at least is convinced that *Tone* won't disappoint. "We've worked hard on the storyline and the artificial intelligence and we've included a strong multi-player element in an effort to keep everyone happy." However, unlike most multi-player games, the players must sometimes cooperate to win the game. "If players spend too much time fighting each other, they will lose," maintains Todd. "The Leviathan [the all-seeing CPU-controlled master force] is stronger than all the players, and is always on the offensive."

Unlike every other strategy game, *Tone* is side-scrolling only and there are no blood and guts. Instead, the player must plan ahead for a multitude of real-time battles and indulge in some pretty complex resource management that involves training floaters (the main game characters) and even buildings to make them more efficient. In case you're thinking that it sounds too complicated, all objects and creatures in the game will be covered with blanket orders so the player won't have to spend ages micro-managing everything under their control. "We want the player to spend their time developing and expanding their forces and developing a strategy, not constantly checking that a certain character has enough food," Todd explains.

If *Ascendancy* can be criticised for anything, it was that it seemed to give the player too much too soon. Todd and the rest of The Logic Factory team are adamant this will not happen again. "There are 15 island worlds that the player will need to discover and explore and each world contains specific mysteries that must be solved in order to bridge the gap to new islands. As the player discovers new islands, they'll be able to get their hands on new powers that get more complex as they progress through the game. It's going to be huge, and the more the player gets into it, the more they'll find. We want the player to be constantly surprised."

It's always difficult to judge exactly whether a game like *Tone* will deliver and, as with all strategy games, the proof will be in the playing. A quick guided tour of some of the levels that are currently in place, a gander at all the art and the obvious enthusiasm and attention to detail that The Logic Factory have for their next game should be enough to convince even the most sceptical gamer that *The Tone Rebellion* could bring an interesting new slant to what is now a very over-crowded genre. **Z**



Product details

Developer: The Logic Factory

Publisher: VIE

Website: www.vie.com.uk

Release Date: September



THE LOGIC FACTORY SWEEPED ONTO THE PC scene last year with the quite brilliant *Ascendancy*. Although the game was generally well-received, they feel that they've learnt a great deal from their first foray into the PC market and are now looking to produce a completely original and absorbing real-time strategy game that's totally unlike anything you've seen before. "We wanted to make a game that we really wanted to play, a game that was completely original and looked like nothing you've ever seen before," maintains Todd Templeman, producer and co-founder of The Logic Factory. "And at the same time we wanted to make the game look so good, you just had to sit down and play it once you saw it. We've spent ages getting the detail in there and making it look just beautiful. We think it's one of the best looking games we've ever seen."

Graphically, *The Tone Rebellion* is exquisite. The Logic Factory have opted for crisp hi-res graphics and have really gone to town with the detailing. Objects and characters are all being independently animated to give the impression of constant movement, while the backdrops wouldn't look out of place framed above your mantelpiece. As Todd boots up the intro sequence and the haunting soundtrack kicks in through the speakers, it's obvious they have at least one very capable musician in their ranks as well as a team of extremely competent graphic artists. "We got a lot of feedback from people who played *Ascendancy*," asserts Todd, "and one of the things people really loved was the music, so we've just gone out there and tried to outdo ourselves again and make it even better. We think it's good to create the right kind of atmosphere and draw the player into the game."

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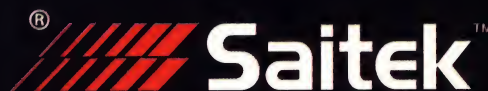
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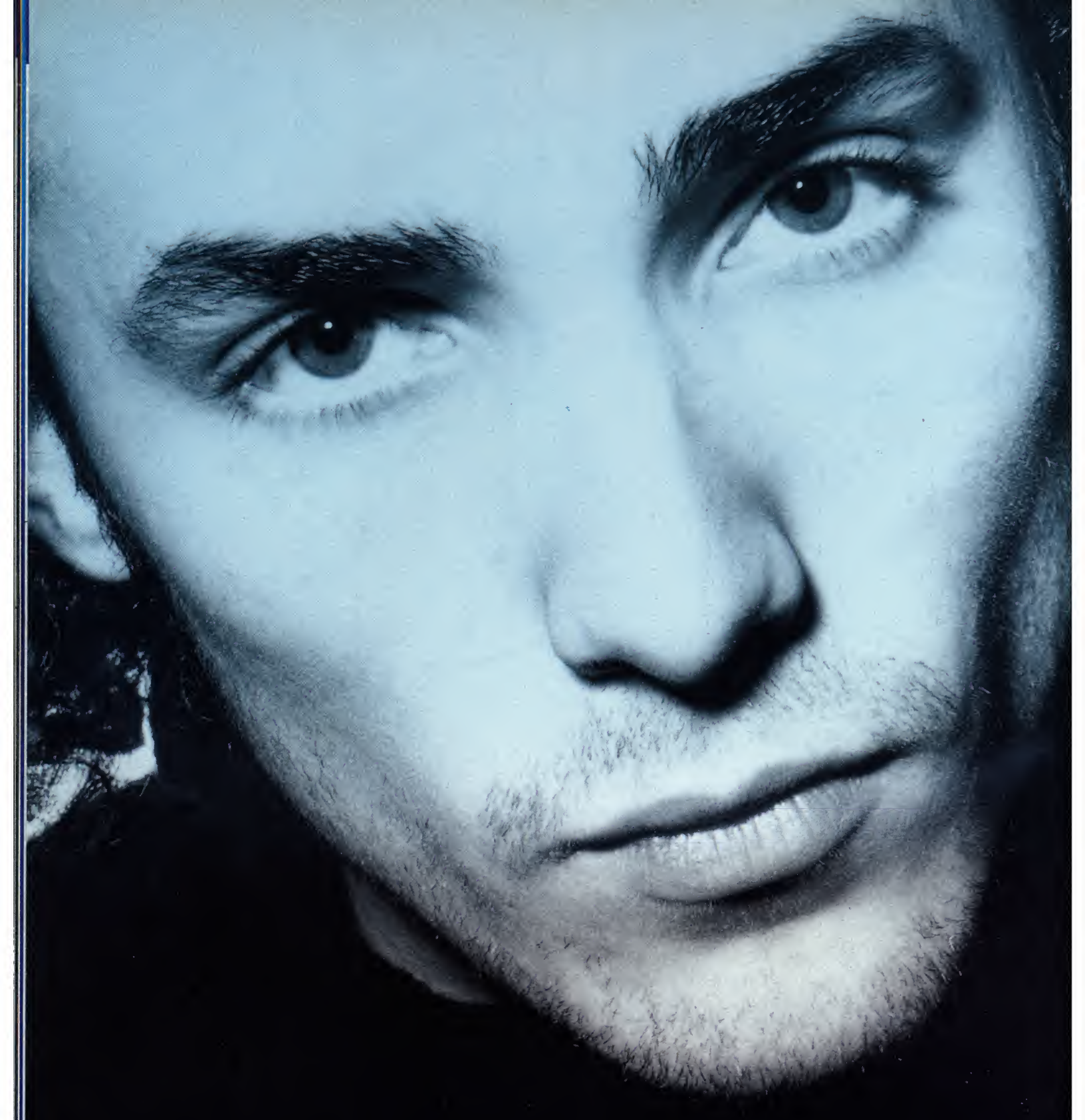
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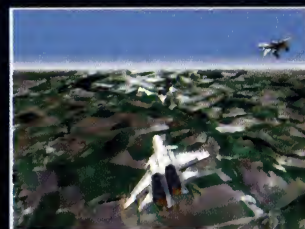
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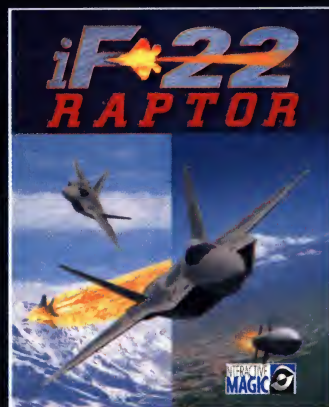
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Review ZONE



To say that Chris was the happiest person in the office this month would be a bit of an understatement. Finally, after much angst and pacing he got his hands on a reviewable version of *X-COM 3: Apocalypse*. To put it bluntly, they met, they fell in love. There's no talk of marriage yet, but the rest of us are convinced that we'll be hearing the patter of tiny *X-COM* feet before the end of the year.

In Perspective

This is designed to be a purely visual guide as to how games of a similar style compare to one another. The bars do not relate to previous review scores... they are simply an indication of how the reviewer feels about the products on a sliding scale.

Game 1



Game 2



Cool games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunch-time/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...

X-COM 3: Apocalypse
Carmageddon
Theme Hospital
X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter
Quake

Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...

Axelerator
Theatre Of Pain
Speedster
Sega Rally
Banzai Bugs

Scoring system

90+	CLASSIC
80-89	RECOMMENDED
70-79	GOOD
50-69	AVERAGE
40-49	BELOW AVERAGE
21-39	POOR
20 and below	PANTS

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(Above) *Redneck Rampage* was surprisingly playable.

Thanks this issue to

- Jason Dutton @ MicroProse
- Alison Grant @ Interplay
- Lidia Stoichov @ EIDOS
- Promethean Design
- Inner Workings
- Tony Jenkins
- Special thanks to Spike, Sam, Tuft, Clive & Nudge



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Awards



90+ CLASSIC

The highest accolade a game can attain. It's innovative, extremely playable and has masses of long-term appeal. If you're going to buy a game this month, it should be this.



80-89 RECOMMENDED

An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something to make it a gaming classic. Well worth checking out, especially if you're a big fan of the genre.



20 and below PANTS

Absolutely bloody awful. Crap with a capital C. Naff with a capital N. Do not buy this game, it will ruin your life and all those who come into contact with you. Got it? Have we made ourselves clear?

Looking back

On a Wing and a prayer

DESPITE HEAVY social schedules, almost everyone on the team has found time to enjoy a spot of multi-player *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* (or 'X-Wing Vs f*cking TIE f*cking Fighter' as Macca

four-hour *Puzzle Bobble* sessions which keep me serenely sedated.

John Davison's been drawn into the *Star Wars* mania this issue, but concedes that while *X Vs TIE* is brilliantly atmospheric – and that the opportunity to act out your very own *Star*

pretty good, although he's still hopelessly enthralled with *Champ Manager 2*. *X Vs TIE* is on Jeremy's menu too, albeit only multi-player.

Between naked Mazola oil Twister sessions, Macca's been dabbling with the dark side in, yes, *X Vs TIE* (he *did* write the review after all),

but can't see himself playing it for very much longer than he has to. A man after my own heart – Macca has also admitted that he's succumbed to the strange alluring powers of *Puzzle Bobble*, at the same time proclaiming he's the best at it. Which I doubt very much.

Gaming nut Chris Anderson dropped everything this month in favour of a finished copy of *X-COM 3*. 3DO's *Heroes Of Might And Magic II*, which he describes as being 'low in graphics, high in gameplay', has fallen by the wayside, as have the

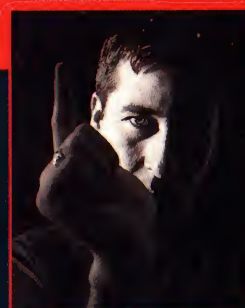


now calls it) over the network back at the office – but only in the evenings, naturally.

I've failed to become hooked myself, preferring instead to supplement my space combat diet with EA's stunning *Darklight Conflict*, not to mention the usual

Wars episode is utterly fab – you never really feel like you're doing very much. I think John had hoped to get more from LucasArts' latest.

Frustrated football manager Jeremy Wells is at it again with Gremlin's *Premier Manager 97*, which he says is



with Paul Mallinson

numerous N64 distractions.

Although Chris insists he's only playing the *X-COM 3* "because Jeremy made me", we all know he's the biggest *X-COM 2* fan in the world and has been eagerly anticipating this moment for more than two years. Chris claims that *X-COM 3* has exceeded all his expectations – "It's brilliant. It's my favourite game of all time," he told me. It goes without saying that he'll be playing this solidly for the next couple of months, so watch out for an update in next month's Looking Back.

And what of the absent Charlie Brooker? What's he been up to all this time? Well, while we've been locked away in the *Zone* basement playing eight-player networked *X Vs TIE*, surfing the Internet and discussing the merits of WADs, PAKs and DLLs – he's been out doing 'sad' things like going to restaurants with his girlfriend, holding hands, having sex, buying flowers and kissing. We think he should come back and get himself a life... **Z**



ATI 3D
Native Version
Available



3DBLASTER
Native Version
Available



3DFX
Native Version
Available



DIAMOND STEALTH
Native Version
Available



MATROX MYSTIQUE
Native Version
Available



POWERVR
Native Version
Available



The software is designed to take advantage of **D3D**



The software is designed to take advantage of **MMX**



This software will only run under **WINDOWS 95**



The software may run slowly, especially in hi-res mode



The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTINPUT**



The software supports **MICROSOFT DIRECTPLAY**



The software supports **INTERNET PLAY**



The software will run acceptably on a **486DX2/66**

THE BENCHMARK PC

At PC Zone all games are played and tested on a DAN Technology Pentium 133 with 16Mb RAM, a 2Mb graphics card and a quad-speed CD-ROM drive.



X-COM 3.5



Apocalypse

The mighty *X-COM* returns once more to deny **Chris Anderson** all his spare time, friends, life etc. Not that he's complaining, mind.



IT'S NO SECRET THAT I'M ONE OF THE biggest *X-COM* fans in the entire universe. To this end I've been the subject of many amusing witticisms in the office. Jeremy never lets me forget how sad I am for raving on about a turn-based strategy game. I always counter this with the observation that CM2 is a jumped-up spreadsheet. It may be very colourful, but it's still a spreadsheet. So it was that I was the obvious choice to review *X-COM 3*, and you could be forgiven for thinking that I jumped at the chance. Well, as far as the Zone team are concerned, I did. As soon as we knew when it was coming in, I dutifully declared that I, and only I, would be responsible for the verdict on the new *X-COM* monster the moment it arrived. However, I was secretly harbouring serious doubts as to whether or not MicroProse would come up with the goods for a third time.

You see, when you get a strategy game that's as near-as-damn-it perfect as *X-COM*, you kind of like it the way it is, and you don't want to ruin the experience by playing a new version that doesn't live up to expectations.

X-COM 2 was a pretty safe bet because it was almost exactly the same as *X-COM 1*, except that it had slightly different graphics and an underwater theme. So why did I give the sequel the impressive score of 94? Well, it's simple really. Along with *X-COM* fans the whole world over, I was happy just to be playing *X-COM* again, with an all-new storyline. I was happy in the same way that *Civilization* fans were happy to play *Civ 2* just because, well, it was more of the same.

I'm going to be totally honest and admit that there is another reason I was worried about *X-COM 3*. I saw it at a show about six months ago. The PR guy from MicroProse put me in front of a computer screen and looked at me expectantly. I dutifully enthused about the game in front of me to said PR man, while secretly I was thinking "shit that looks incredibly complicated, they've totally arsed it up".

I'm sure you've guessed from the *PC Zone* classic logo (and probably a peek at the score) that the creators of *X-COM 3* have most definitely *not* arsed things up. They obviously shared my concerns about the complexity of the game, and to get round it they've had to be very, very clever indeed...



(Left and above) Classic shit-hitting-fan scenario. You'll see lots of these.

Kill the bastards

You've spent days researching the best equipment, you've spent long hours agonising over which agents are the best value for money, and now you're finally ready to take on the alien scumbags in the all-new, real-time tactical section of *X-COM 3*. Let me save you the bother of searching the manual to find out what those fancy new icons do with my handy guide to the real-time battle menu.



❶ Game options (save before you die, load when you *have* died etc).

2 Control how your agents use their weapons. Hold fire if there are civilians in the way. Force your agents to take an aimed shot (takes longer but it's obviously more accurate than a normal shot). Auto shot makes your agents reel off several shots in quick succession but you need a weapon with auto capabilities for this.

③ These two icons determine whether your grouped units travel in a bunch (better for firing out in the open but leaves your agents exposed) or in single file (safer and better in narrow passageways).

4 Use this bar to decide how your agents will move. Make them kneel to improve their aim. Make them crawl to make them harder to hit. Make them run away when the shit hits the fan etc.

5 Attitude icons. The more aggressive your agents, the more likely they are to take out the enemy (but they're also more likely to take risks in aggressive mode).

6 Time bars. Set the speed of the real-time section here.

7 Put your agents into groups with these bars. Any aliens you control appear here too.

8 Your agents. You worked that one out all by yourself, didn't you?

◀ First things first

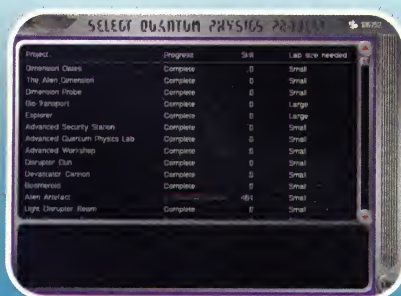
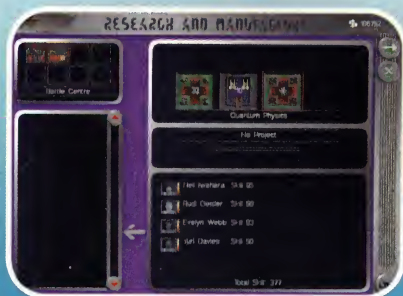
The first thing you'll see after a surprisingly short intro to the game is the *X-COM* cityscape. This provides you with an overall view of the entire city in which the game is based. From this screen you can do all sorts of things such as build up your bases, send agents to investigate buildings for alien activity, raid buildings belonging to organisations who are hostile to you, and while you're at it shoot down a couple of alien craft, go on tactical missions, look after research and engineering and two million other things besides. I'm deliberately trying to make this sound very complicated because I thought it *was* very complicated until I'd played



At long last you can choose the agents you recruit before paying for them.

Toys for the boys

You won't get anywhere in this game if you don't research alien technology. As you can see from these shots, you can constantly keep tabs on what you have and haven't researched at the click of a button. Always keep an eye on these screens or you'll never keep up with the alien menace. You'll get bored, too, if you don't get any new toys to play around with.



it for a couple of hours. You see, although you can do all these things simultaneously if you want to, you don't necessarily have to. Mythos (the developers) have been very clever by giving you a very big, highly complex real-time world to play around in that you're totally free to explore without being penalised should you forget to do something or other. You won't get very far if you fail to carry out certain tasks (such as researching new weapons and equipment for example), but most of the menu screens you'll see when you first load up the Cityscape can be ignored until you're a bit more familiar with the game. In fact, you can probably complete the game simply by doing all the stuff you did in the first two games (providing you've played them, of course) and ignoring the new stuff completely.

But should you decide to take this route, it almost goes without saying that you'll be missing all the fun, not to mention the point. Either way, there are five tutorials in the manual that won't take you more than 20 minutes to get through and that tell you everything you need to know to get started in *X-COM 3*. After you've gone through these you can quite happily throw the manual away if you want to, as all the other stuff you need to know will become blatantly obvious as you play the game.

However, a word of warning is in order here if you're the sort of person who doesn't want to know about manuals. If you choose to make your own way through the game, be prepared to stare stupidly at the screen for ages before you have any clue what's going on. Like I said, the game is very simple to play once you've got the basics, but if you can't be bothered to sit through a couple of quick tutorials, you're asking for trouble. Don't say I didn't tell ya. Let's move on then, to what awaits you at the other end of the initial learning curve – in other words, the game itself.



Suddenly it all went horribly wrong.

Different but the same

The year is 2097 (or something like that) and the aliens who made your life a misery in the first two games are back to taunt you a second time. This time round, they've built dimension gates all around the city. They periodically send fleets of attack ships, scouts, bombers and other fun items through these gates. As commander of X-COM, you are once again tasked with putting an end to the alien threat.

This involves keeping tabs on a number of things. At the beginning of the game you'll be concentrating on building up your base and recruiting a team of X-COM agents to send on attack missions. This is where you'll see the first of many major improvements over the first two games. You no longer have to send for a group of agents only to discover on their arrival that they're all complete arseholes. The new hire and fire screen shows you which agents are available to join your team. You simply select the agents whose particular talents match the criteria you've set for the job at hand. If you want a team of crack snipers (who may be weak in other areas as a result), then that's exactly what you'll get. Or you might want a team who are very skilled in Psionics (the art of taking over the mind of an alien, whom you can then control as though he were a member of your own team), but these guys tend to be a bit shit at things like shooting from a distance. Either way, the choice is yours. The same goes for scientists. All available scientists have a rating out of 100. You can see how high (or low) their ratings are before you take them on, so you've always got the best guys available at the time you entered this screen. This is the sort of thing that really should've been in the first two games but hey, better late than never, eh?

You also need to go to the base screen to allocate research for different areas. You'll learn more about the aliens and their technology as you conduct research throughout the

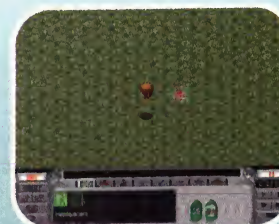


game. Once you've researched an alien weapon, your engineers can produce it in their workshop and your agents can then use it in battle. Unlike the first two games, you can't produce alien aircraft you've researched, but you'll be able to produce brand new ships of your own once you've got a better understanding of alien technology. Researching and using new items has always been one of the best things about the X-COM games, and X-COM 3 is thankfully well up to expectations in this department, with lots of new stuff becoming available the further you get into the game. Of course, the resource management side of the game, though almost a complete game in itself, is only one part of the overall X-COM experience, because sooner or later you'll come into direct contact with the aliens. When this happens, you'll be plunged headlong into combat with hordes of alien scumbags.

Aliens ahoy



I spy, with my little eye, something beginning with 'U'.



And here it is coming through the Dimension Gate.



Up comes the vehicle screen. Go get him boys.



Soon that nasty alien will be no more. Easy, non?

Know who your friends are



The aliens aren't the only potential pain in the arse in X-COM 3. The city is populated by many factions, any of whom can take a dislike to you if they don't approve of your activities. Hostile or unfriendly factions are also more prone to alien invasion, so keep an eye on this screen here to find out who likes you, and who's taken up with those alien scum.

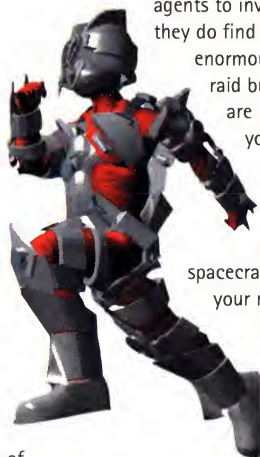


(Above left) Equip your agents before going into battle. (Above centre and right) The UFOpaedia provides detailed info on all vehicles and equipment in the game... as well as keeping you up to date on the alien rosters.

Let the battle commence

I'm sorry Jeremy, but your taunting days have finally come to an end. While *Championship Manager 2* is, and always will be, the footballing equivalent of Microsoft Excel, *X-COM* has finally shed its stigmatic turn-based skin and grown a brand new layer of chaotic, blood-curdling real-time action. *X-COM* die-hards need not worry, the option for turn-based action is still there, but to be honest, the new real-time combat is so good I really can't see why anyone would want to play the much slower (and often infuriating) turn-based tactical game. The argument that turn-based combat is more of a strategic challenge doesn't hold up any more as you can stop the real-time action at any point to make strategic decisions.

The other advantage to real-time is that you can speed up the action when you get close to the end of a mission. That final elusive alien git that simply refuses to pop his head out of whatever hole he's hiding in is no longer a complete pain in the arse as you can simply speed up the action, send all your agents whizzing around the play area, and you'll find the culprit in no time. Then of course, there's the fact that real-time combat, by its very nature, is much more exciting than its turn-based counterpart.



Aside from the real-time nature of the new combat section, there are other areas of the tactical game that have been given a complete facelift. The variety of missions, for example, is much greater than before. You can send agents to investigate buildings for alien activity (and if they do find any you can pretty much guarantee that an enormous scrap will immediately ensue). You can raid buildings belonging to organisations which are hostile towards you. If you take this option you'll have the added satisfaction of completely wrecking the building belonging to the organisation that pissed you off, as well as being able to steal all their equipment at the end of the mission. You can also use your spacecraft to attack enemy buildings, or even some of your road vehicles if they've got suitable weaponry. Generally speaking, *X-COM 3* has much more variety than the early games in the series.

You can pause time and spend ages assigning agents and vehicles to tasks, or just speed things up if you want to get on with things. This is the beauty of the open-ended nature of the game, and this is what makes *X-COM 3* not only better than the previous *X-COM* games, but for my money better than any game of its type. Now if you'll excuse me there's a whole world out there in danger of being taken over by aliens, and I'm not going to get it sorted out sitting here blabbering to you lot. 2

Mind over matter

Psionic attacks are a very important part of the tactical game. Build a Psi-gym at your base and you can train your agents to use Psionic skills. Equip your agents with a mind-bending device and you're ready to use Psi-powers in battle. In this example an enemy unit has been spotted and I've called up the Psionic attack screen. I can now get my agent to perform one of four Psionic attacks:



1 CONTROL BODY

If this attack is successful, I'll be controlling the body of the target unit – and I can get him to take out members of his own team.

2 PANIC

The only use for this attack is to take the enemy unit out of the equation. He'll either freeze or run around the place like a loon.

3 STUN

This is a very useful attack in the early stages of the game. Any stunned aliens can be taken back to base for research.

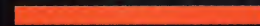
4 PROBE UNIT

Useful if you come up against an enemy unit you're not familiar with and want to know what their statistics are.

In Perspective

Apart from the first two *X-COM* games, there isn't really anything you can directly compare *X-COM 3* to, but it does have certain elements that you'll find in all the other games mentioned here. The real-time combat is vaguely reminiscent of *Syndicate Wars*, which is fab but doesn't have the depth of *Apocalypse*. *Civ 2* has more complex research, but lacks the variety of *X-COM 3*. This is how the games compare as an overall experience.

X-COM 1 and 2



X-COM 3



Civilization 2



Syndicate Wars



Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb (8Mb DOS)

Processor: DX4100

Graphics: SVGA VESA card required

Sound: SoundBlaster and compatibles

Controls: Mouse

Note: Quad-speed CD-ROM drive required

Score

Don't argue with me, it's the best. Okay?

95

Price: £44.99

Release date: July

Publisher: MicroProse

Telephone: 01454 893893

Website: <http://www.microprose.com>

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SPORTS**
If it's in the game,
it's in the game.

FIFA SOCCER MANAGER

For Windows® 95

X-Wing vs TIE Fighter



Well, if it isn't the most eagerly anticipated game of all time. All the yumminess of the *Star Wars Trilogy*, with all the gooeyness of *X-Wing* combat, and a huge dollop of multi-player gamerism on top to create one big lump of gameplaying loveliness. Will it be that organic, that seamless? Or will it be poo? Your host: **David McCandless.**



HERE BEGINS THE X-WING VS TIE FIGHTER experience... "If you guard that transport, I'll take this one... keep your eyes peeled for enemy fighters... what the hell are you doing? I'm the squad commander... if anyone does the spinning flybys it's me, yeah? Quentos... woah! Advanced TIEs at 2kms. Woah! Assault Gunboats at 4kms and closing. Oh shite - why did I choose a Y-Wing... noooo! Don't rush off. Stay here and defend the - Christ. Incoming missile - where's the chaff? WHERE'S THE BLOODY CHAFF? Oh great, lost my aft shield. Er, Red Two - could do with some help here. Red Two? Hello? It's your squad commander calling? I NEED SOME HELP. What the hell are you doing over there? Shit, shit. Got two on my tail now. Transport's been hit. Where's my cock-smoking wingman? Ow! Ow! Shit! Shields at 12 per cent. Redirect energy. Sod it. Dump all laser energy to shields. Evasive manoeuvres. RED TWO! GET YOUR ARSE HERE NOW! I don't give a crap about that Star Destroyer, I need you - Star Destroyer? Oh man. Gotta weave. Gotta turn. I have you now. Take my four-pronged death laser, Empire scum. Woooo. Great shot kid - one in a million. What? Whaddya mean I lose 2000 points for destroying a friendly ship? How the hell was I supposed to know it wasn't Rebel?... What CMD? Oh great... lost a transport. Completion of mission objectives now somewhat impossible... It's all Red Two's fault. Ow! Piss! Shields crumbling... must... eject... must... bzzzzzztttt - naaaarrgrgrgrhhhhhh!"

You get the gist. *X-Wing vs TIE Fighter* is multi-player er, *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter*. The best bits of both games, combined, with some new wazzy visuals, a new musical score, a glossy front-end, and endless multi-player possibilities. Almost.

In this incarnation, you can fly nine ships. Rebel-wise: the cool X-Wing, the old but gold Y-Wing, the ninjascope A-Wing, and the ancient Z-95 HeadHunter (no B-Wing and

definitely no Millennium Falcon). On the Imperial side, the whole range of TIEs - Fighter, Interceptor, Advanced and Bomber. Plus the Assault Gunboat. The idea is you (and hopefully, a barrel load of your best 'chums') progress from learner to master in easy steps, flitting from pre-planned mission to pre-planned mission, stopping off only for a quick dogfight or head-to-head grudge match. On a technical level, multi-player will work on an IPX network (eight-player), Internet (four-player), or direct modem and serial (two-player).

Learn to fly and die

Missions are grouped into five categories. Exercise missions teach the newbie scum among us the basics of flying an interstellar spacecraft. You know, playschool stuff like targeting, moving and shooting. Duh. Actually, they do get more complex later on, teaching you the value of swear words like 'co-operation' (yuk) and 'tactics' (gag). You're not taught the virtues of hand-holding, but that's LucasArts for you.

Next up, when you feel the force growing inside you, is Melee - a set of simple deathmatches for single and two-player teams. Humans and AI opponents can be mixed and matched, as can the various ships and ordinance settings. For further challenge and hassle, minefields and asteroids storms can be chosen as the environments.

Similar to Melee is Tournament, a rank of activities for the truly exceptional pilots. Budding Daley Thompsons can partake in pent and triathlon events, which are designed to find the overall 'best'. Again both single-player and two-man 'couples' are catered for.

The Combat section will be familiar to old-fashioned *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* cronies, being as they are the usual menagerie of mission facing the average Rebel or Imperial pilots. Convoy escort (with the inevitable 'Assault Gunboats at 4km'), tactical support, hit and fades, raids, and head-long assaults on capital ships. While you can fly these babies single-player, the ideal situation is for eight networked players to dip in - four on the Dark Side, four on the other.



(Above) Let's get the "aren't the graphics spoogetworthy" caption out of the way now shall we? Wow! Just look at those graphics. Aren't they just spoogetsome?



(Above) Although there's no campaign mode as such, there is the option to fly between three and seven missions back to back. Whichever team accumulates the most points wins.



From tea boy to top ace

And then finally, for those with too much time on their hands, you can engage in a full scale Battle scenario. Between three and seven missions can be flown back to back and, rather like a vast intergalactic pool tournament, it can be best of five, seven, or whatever. Both defensive and offensive are mixed together. The best team wins on accumulated points.

For a full motion frame rate, you're looking at a P133 easily. Perhaps even a P200 with a slinky 3D card.

Any mission from any section can be flown from a Rebel or Imperial perspective. All that varies – other than the ships, natch – is comms traffic. Rebel pilots get lots of squealing and self-congratulatory high fiving from their wingmen. Imperial top guns get a constant stream of "rebel scum"–this and "rebel scum"–that. Also, difficulty can be moderated (AI of opponents increases, wingmen AI decreases) and certain factors can be randomised: start positions, cargo location etc.

As in the previous games, you can host and cultivate various pilots, rising through the ranks from teaboy to Top Ace, gathering plaudits, medals and self-confidence en route. Progression is points-based, with you gathering up to four-digit bonuses for completing mission objectives, taking out Vader-quality pilots, and coming top in dogfights.

So far so X-Wing. X Vs TIE isn't that much enhanced beyond the TIE Fighter Collector's CD. Graphics-wise, it now paints the craft with the true texture-maps from the films, and there's all manner of 65K colour schemes, mip-mapping and



All the player records, including kills, missions flown and completed are stored so you can show off your prowess to your friends.

Plotoles

In a previous preview of this game, we listed a bunch of what we considered were 'inconsistencies' or 'silliness' in the plot of the *Star Wars Trilogy*. Many readers with big hairy moles on their necks wrote in complaining about our blasphemy. Okay, oh hairy ones, complain about these *Return Of The Jedi* faux pas:

1. The Rebels send a covert troop of crack commandos down to the Forest Moon of Endor to knock out the Death Star shield, right. It's all very hush hush and SAS. The troops are all dressed in combat fatigues and camouflage so they blend in with all the trees. So who do they send down with them? That's right. C3PO. A great big shiny golden camp robot, who glares with the force of a thousand mirrors. Very bloody camouflaged.
2. The beginning of the film concerns itself with a very 'cunning' plot to rescue Han Solo, cooked up by Luke Skywalker. What a ludicrous plan! How many variables does it depend on? It pre-supposes that R2 would be posted on "his master's sail barge", that Lando would be on the same speeder as Han Solo, that Leia wouldn't be killed by Jabba for trying to nick Solo, and so on. Que?
3. Princess Leia may have the last line in the film but her performance is questionable. There's the matter of a certain cold-blooded execution. In the vast endless speeder chase on Endor, she gets separated from Luke, crashes, and is roused by an Ewok. She and the fuzzball are then attacked by a StormTrooper sniper. All this culminates in a trooper creeping right up close to her and telling her to "freeze". The Ewok distracts him by hitting his feet and Leia swings at him with a tree branch. She then shoots the other speeder, which explodes, killing the trooper. So, what happens to the first trooper? Presumably, with all that body armour on, a blow from a tree branch isn't going to kill him. So he's still alive. But if he's alive, he'll come to and tell the Empire about the Rebel presence. So we can assume that – in a cut-scene – Leia pointed her blaster at his face and blew his head off at point blank range. Right?
4. Similarly, on his master's sail barge, Leia again exposes her homicidal tendencies by throttling Jabba to death with a chain (this is a kids' film, right?). Strange how, on a barge packed with loads of Jabba's cronies, nobody – not one person – raises a hand to stop their master's windpipe from being splintered. They can't all be distracted by the drama outside, surely?

light-sourcing. But then TIE Fighter ran on a 486. For a full motion frame rate now, you're looking at a P133 easily, if not a P200 with a 3D card on board. Nevertheless, it does look 'fantastich' (as our German cousins say). Spacecraft hulls look realistically dull and pitted. Fire on an asteroid and you'll see an explosive splash as the bolt hits. Kamikazee up close to a Star Destroyer and you can almost see down the barrels of the ion cannons cutting through your shields. Everything looks suitably cinematic and 'nineties'.

The much lauded feel of the game is still there. From the glorious handling of the X-Wing to the sluggish turning circle of the Assault Gunboat. The industrial appeal of the Y-Wing: great fire rate, crusty to fly. The sheer, all-consuming beauty



(Left) Yep, we all know what this is. The question is, when are we going to be allowed to fly it?



of the TIE Advanced manoeuvrability. It's hard to think of a better feeling than pulling up behind a battered TIE Fighter and giving it all four bolts from your open S-foils. Or wagging furiously, frenetically redirecting power to your shields, screaming to your wingman, cycling madly through your targets, desperately matching speed, desperately clinging onto a missile lock as your opponent pirouettes around the asteroid field, desperately throttling around torpedoes while your frigging R2 units repair your Countermeasure system. And then you get caught out by the excellent uncontrollable spins, collision with another starfighter, or you get toasted by engine wash from Star Destroyers (that tactic doesn't work anymore).

The sounds are all there to accentuate the actions. The laser 'blats'. The groaning near miss with a TIE Fighter. The massive electrical fizz as your wingman buys the farm. And the music. Woah. It's fantastic. The whole John Williams score on the CD, I-mused to the eyeballs, changing pace and tone to suit the dynamics of your battles. Sad as it may sound, it really is like being in the movie.

However, the underlying game has us somewhat divided. As a single-player game, it's not much of a step up from *TIE Fighter*. Think of it as the kind of step an Ewok might make up a staircase built by a Wookiee. Without a storyline spine, the missions are kinda disjointed. You don't really feel the progression. And they soon become repetitive. They're exposed for what they are – practice missions and venues for the greater multi-player experience.

Ah yes, multi-player...

The simple stuff works great. You and a pal working as wingmen taking on streams of TIE Fighters, covering each other, and choosing your targets – great. You and a bunch of chums working a furball in an asteroid field. Each man for himself, lots of targeting the weak and avoiding the 200 per cent shielded strong – great. You and three others enjoying a 20 minute turkey shoot against a fleet of Z-95 Headhunters and shuttle craft. No opposition, just simple seek and destroy, and nicking other people's kills – great. 'Fantantische', as we said earlier. Endless amounts of 'once I was the learner, now I am the master' willy-waving in the aftermath.

The complex missions however, can be a bit messier. A simple co-op operation – two capital ships unleash their fighters against each other, or some frigates need to be escorted to hyperspace – is easy to keep a grip on. The variables come at you in a pre-described order and you have a point of reference – the ship you're protecting or the fleet you're attacking. In less orchestrated campaigns, things can get chaotic. One mission, for example, where four teams of Y-Wings protect three waves of four sets of two shuttles, while trying to destroy each other's shuttles and ships, is a nightmare. Your wingmen – AI or otherwise – are

immediately lost in the mass of identical ships. Cycling through the tens of targets takes about 60 seconds. And with no geographical reference point, it's difficult to know which way you're heading, where your shuttles are going, or where the next lot are going to appear. There are a host of keyboard shortcuts to help you – store targets, target attack of current target etc – but this is a game which already demands you learn over 70 separate key commands. In the thick of battle, you want to zone in on simple objectives and deal with them with your skill and dexterity.

Too clever by far

Often, if there's a dearth of network players, you may find yourself teamed with one or two AI wingmen. Great – a bit of quality artificial intelligence to soup-up our side. Except the AI is a little too good. Just as the intelligence makes that Advanced TIE a little slippier to get a bead on, it also works to make your wingman a little too effective. Often, if

you slipped off to engage an errant Gunboat or avoid a missile, you can whip back to the battle to find a lot of floating Imperial carcasses and your team eating their full-time KitKats out of their lunchboxes. They'll gladly steal your kill and shoot through you to get theirs. And just try surviving for five seconds in an A-Wing furball with Advanced Missiles.

Also, the network game seems a little too regimented, a little too over-serious. You can't fly eight players on one side, for example. Eight human X-Wings against a fleet of Top Ace AI Advanced TIEs will be a serious challenge. Or test your Top Ace mettle against six human-controlled ships. It's defiantly four-a-side. Also, in furball, a few customisable novelties would've been welcome. An eight-player dogfight where, if you die, you come back in a random ship – Empire or otherwise. That would be fun. And for chrissakes, when are we going to get to fly the Millennium Falcon?

Yes, we have our gripes. Especially as Internet play only supports four players (your LAN-based clan may not get a chance to test itself globally), and we've had endless DirectX 3.0 problems (the game refused to run on two out of the ten machines we tried it on. One machine needed proprietary drivers downloaded for its sound and graphics card).

Nevertheless, it's hard to suppress the feeling of excitement one gets when the first drumrolls pound out of the speakers. It's hard not to get excited about engaging *Star Wars* fantasies, chasing your mates around an asteroid field, flying in close formation, scurrying to pick a deadly TIE Interceptor off your best mate's six. As a single-player game, *X Vs TIE* is pretty limited. As a multi-player game, despite our niggles, it is resolutely and undeniably, good. **Z**

In Perspective

As *X-Wing VS TIE* is essentially a multi-player game, it makes sense to compare it to other network games – hence *Quake*. We've also compared it to *TIE Fighter* so you know what's what.

Quake

X-Wing VS TIE Fighter

Darklight Conflict

TIE Fighter

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P90

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse, keyboard and joystick

Note: Win95 required; P100 or above recommended for multi-player play



Score

Nearly but not quite the ultimate power in the universe.

89

Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: LucasArts

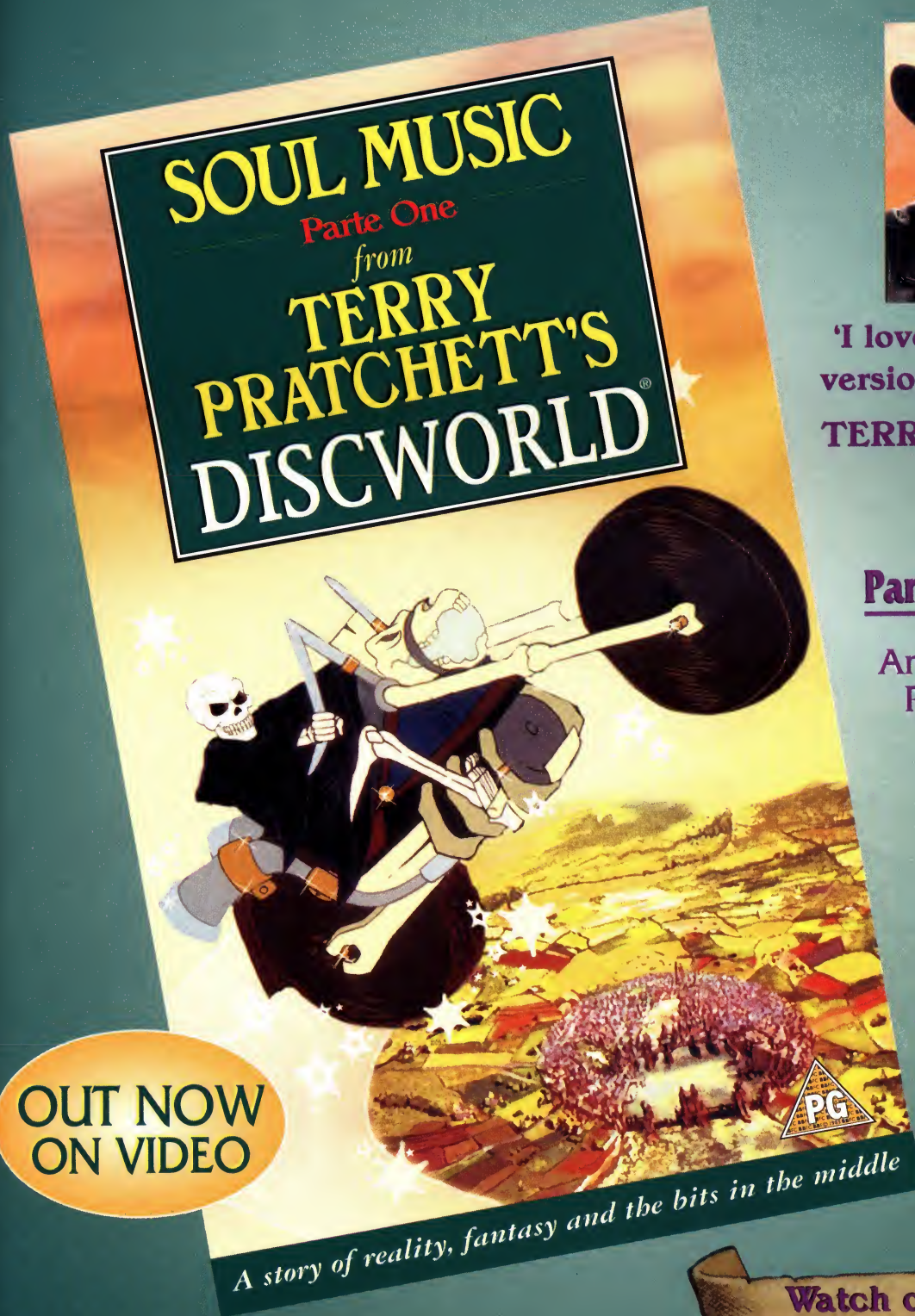
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(Main) Set up those big Brighton/Barcelona clashes for pre-season friendlies that will be the envy of the Third Division. (Top right) Priestfield Stadium is looking rather more impressive than I remember it. (Bottom right) There are no restrictions on where you position your players – we just don't have the imagination to exploit this more. (Bottom left) Right then. I'll have a tenner on two-nil at half-time with Espanol to go on and clinch it at four-two.

Premier Manager 97

Patrick McCarthy's sister used to have a house in Spain, and he used to go there quite often for free holidays. Too much sun fried his brain, so he can never think of relevant introductions to football games any more. Or...



THINK OF SPAIN AND YOU THINK OF GOOD food and short, excitable people with rather too much in the way of body hair; you think of films featuring food and sex in exotic combinations; and you think of an excellent style of football that combines the skill levels of Serie A with a great deal more entertainment and excitement (as well as top-class players having a piss against a goal-post before a corner in an important match). But you don't, as a rule, think of computer games. Until now.

Premier Manager 97 was developed in Spain by Dynamic Software, whose own *Futbol 5.0* sells by the supertanker-load in their home country. They've avoided the (probably slight) temptation to go head-to-head with *CM2*, and opted for another attempt at a lighter approach to football management.

Money makes the world go around

Like its recent imitator *Ultimate Soccer Manager*, *PM97* offers you the chance to control everything from the team selection and tactics, to ground improvements, advertising hoardings rental, ticket pricing and even the cost of a BSE-in-a-bun. Everyone knows about the football management game split between *CM2*-heads and *PM*-sters: it's like the *Quake* vs *Duke* debate (with *CM2* as *Quake*) – only nobody's sad



(Top) Finally Timmy's love proved too great, and he had to give the opposing centre forward a flying kiss. (Middle) The increasing problem of formation dancing teams invading the pitch will be addressed in the next FIFA meeting. (Bottom) Nobody trusts a referee who skips.

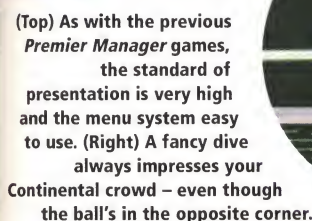
enough to write to games mags to argue about it.

Heavyweight *CM2*-heads criticise the financial tinkering of *PM*, imply the game should be a *SimCity* add-on disk and laugh aloud at the (in)accuracy of the ratings and transfer fees. *PM* fans don't give a toss, enjoying the fact that they can buy Robbie Fowler for a million quid and generally have fun at the expense of accuracy.

The developers have tried to cater for everyone this time by offering four levels of involvement: *Trainer*, where you're basically a Phil Neal-type (only ideally not as thick) and don't even hire and fire players; *Manager*, where you take control

The data day

Included in the game is a full database of all the players and clubs in the game – handy for all those new Manchester Utd fans, who can't remember who's who. It's well put together: you can check anything from a team's league positions over the last ten years to an individual player's preferred playing position. *Shoot* and *Smash Hits* readers will be pleased to see it supplies player profiles: a nice picture, their age, date of birth, height, weight, penis size, and so on. There are honours and career appearance details and even some "anecdotes". Unfortunately these aren't of the "I was comin' aht of Tel's gaff at Sam, mob'-anded, wiv Wisey and Vinnie in tow and viss bird says to us..." variety – they're just extra career details. It's nicely put together, and you can add things to it yourself, but after a while it gets a bit samey. It's all in bland footie-speak, and let's face it, they're hardly going to slag anyone off. In the end, you tend to use it to trawl for embarrassing middle names. Peter Schmeichel's, for example, is Boleslaw, which I always thought was what Lester Piggott asks for with a baked potato.



(Above left) You can train players as a group, or individually. You might like to give Ravanelli some Interest practice, for example. (Above right) Don't forget to get in there quick if you want a top-flight Handling Coach, kids!



The transfer system, an essential element of a management game, is disappointingly weak. There's no in-squad indication when you put someone on the transfer list, and you can't control the asking price. There aren't that many players to choose from at any one time on the list – but that doesn't matter, thanks to the fact that “the directors will only let you make one offer to sign a player per week”. This is ludicrous. You might want two of the transfer-listed players, but you can effectively kiss goodbye to one of them. And since you can't cancel or adjust a bid once you've made it, you'd better get it right first time. No-one else ever puts in a counter bid (or if they do, you never see it), so there's no feeling of being involved in an on-going process. You can't look at a player and see whether anyone else is interested in them. And you can't make a shortlist of players you're interested in.

of some team affairs but avoid a lot of the tedious pricing stuff; President, where you get control over a lot of the finances, or Total, where you go into power-crazy Jesus Gil v Gil mode and take over the world.

Up to 20 players can take part, but only the four English leagues are included. You get 'proper' players who are reasonably accurately rated, better transfer pricing than in the past, and clubs that are less likely to sell top stars on the opening day for 50 quid. One nice touch is the pre-season objective you're given according to the club you choose. With Spurs, mine was "mid-table": depressingly accurate, and a sad indictment of the Gerry Francis years.

The whole game looks better than previous offerings and is better organised. The tactics and team line-up screen is clear, and you can load and save different tactics. The tactics designer utilises an excellent click-and-drag zonal player coverage system that I'm sure we'll be seeing in other games before long. There are also options to control your style of play. Unfortunately, it doesn't automatically revert to a pre-game selection after the match, so you have to remember to switch it back yourself before the next game if you had to make adjustments during a match.

The biggest selling point, though, is the facility to watch a match being played using a sort of mini-*Actua Soccer* approach. If you don't want to sit through an entire game, you can opt to see highlights, just text details, or even, for the chronically impatient, an instant result. Match-viewing works quite well. It's occasionally jerky, even on a P133 with low detail settings, but it's very satisfying to see your boys scoring goals. (Then again, I'm happy if Spurs or Gillingham score and all I see is a flashing message in CM2, so I'm easily pleased.)

It's certainly not all footballing loveliness, though. The transfer system leaves a lot to be desired (see box). And players sometimes don't behave as instructed – I opted for a pressing game, and was surprised to see a forward turn and run back into position after missing a tackle, even though



(Above) You can train players as a group, or individually.

Just about the best of the 'lighter' football management games, but not without areas that need work. Watching the match is a nice facility – but if that's your bag wait to see our review of *FIFA Soccer Manager* (next issue). *CM2*'s still the best as far as the feeling of being immersed in a real, ongoing football world, goes.

Football Masters

Note: Windows 95 only



A pretty good overhaul. There are nice touches, but as usual with this series there are some irritating bits, too.



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(Top left) A blatant plug for high-voiced, poodle-haired Canadian rockers or an advert for amyl nitrate? You decide.

(Below left) A blatant plug for high-voiced, poodle-haired Canadian rockers or an advert for amyl nitrate? You decide.

(Above) Curiously, a giant chess board signifies the start/finish line.

Wipeout 2097



With improved graphics using Direct3D, and a futuristic new look, **Steve Hill** burns rubber in the next century.



ANOTHER VISIT TO SEQUELSVILLE FOR Psygnosis. As shrewder readers may already have ascertained, this is the follow-up to last year's *Wipeout*. The

2097 refers to the year, because in a

century's time everyone will be flying around in hover ships shooting each other (as well as wearing shiny silver clothes and taking holidays on the moon). One of the flagship titles for the PlayStation, *Wipeout* on the PC was what is known in the trade as 'a bit shit' and was hampered by ill-defined graphics and the fact that it jerked like a two dollar whore.

As with most sequels these days, *Wipeout 2097* is a case of same meat, different gravy. Again the player is put at the helm of a futuristic craft and required to hurtle around a variety of courses at unlikely speeds, obliterating anyone who gets in the way. The major improvement is in the graphics, which utilise accelerator cards with Direct3D capabilities. The landscapes are particularly crisp and vary from leafy jungle scenarios to bleak frozen wastelands, with some passable weather effects thrown in for good measure.

The game still manages to shift at some pace and the racing is a competitive enough affair, livened up by large doses of ugly, wanton violence. Rockets, missiles, electrobolts, thunder bombs, plasma bolts and mines are all fair game, as well as a somewhat perturbing earthquake effect where a section of the track ripples in a sinister fashion, buffeting rival craft asunder. Further power-ups arrive thick and fast in the shape of turbo, autopilot and shield, and a major part of the gameplay involves weaving all over the track picking up the various treats.

Much of the *Wipeout* marketing has revolved around the

soundtrack, with chart acts such as The Chemical Brothers and New Order appearing on the PlayStation version. Alas, the PC market wasn't deemed significant enough to merit the licensing costs and instead we are treated to the generic bleeps of non-household name Cold Storage, the 'choons' bearing a freak resemblance to those of the first game. As Psygnosis have tried to ram home, *Wipeout 2097* is the ideal game for returning clubbers still chewing their faces off with time on their hands. Rather than staring into middle space, contemplating the wretchedness of your futile existence, you might as well pretend to be piloting a hover ship 100 years into the future while tapping your foot to some glib dance music.

Essentially, *Wipeout 2097* is a console game, but despite its cerebral limitations, it does have a vaguely mesmerising quality and tends to induce a reservoir of drool to collect on your lower lip as you sway gently in your chair, occasionally forgetting to blink. The inclusion of a championship option would have been a welcome addition, adding some longevity to the challenge. As it stands *Wipeout 2097* provides a cheap visceral thrill for as long as you want it. Let it into your life and you will not be disappointed. **Z**



Explosions, trees, what more do you want?

In Perspective

Although *Wipeout 2097* pisses on the original, neither really comes close to Bullfrog's vastly under-rated *Hi-Octane* in terms of adrenaline and playability. Sure the graphics are nice, but when you look at the hardware required to run the game, expectations are understandably pretty high. To get the most from it, invest in one of those pads that look like a PlayStation pad and turn up those speakers.

Wipeout

Wipeout 2097

Hi-Octane

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: P133 (P166 recommended)

Graphics: 3D accelerator card utilising Direct 3D

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick/pad, mouse

Note: Windows 95 only



Score

A huge improvement on the original, which was log.

82

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F16 Fighting Falcon



Paul Presley once came within touching distance of an F16 Falcon, only to be shooed away by large security guards. Although it's a pretty boring story at dinner parties, it does make him our resident Falcon expert.



ALL THE ABOVE IS TRUE. THE ASIAN Aerospace Show in Singapore was the place. I also got the chance to stand under the wing of a B2, mess around in the cargo hold of a Chinook helicopter and get terrible sunburn while gazing at the aerobatics. I've always had a soft spot for the F16 though. I used to prefer the Tomcat (because of Tom Cruise) but when the Falcon was first introduced to the world I was in love.

Consequently, F16 simulations have always been a high priority with me, especially when they promise to be as good as this. As I have quite the pedigree in this field, I've been looking forward to this for ages. And as with most major flight sims, there's only one question that the majority of us want answered...

How real is it?

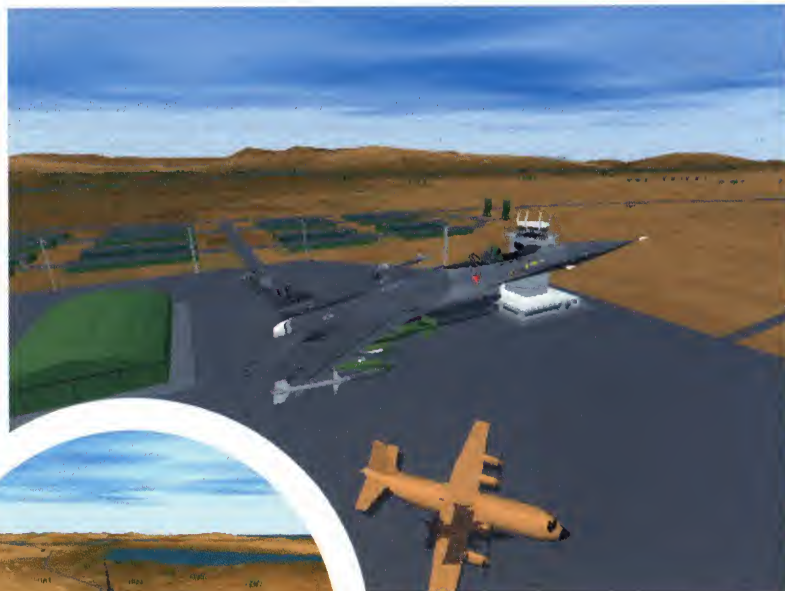
How would I know? You think I fly F16s in my spare time or something? My total real-life flying experience is limited to fastening my seat belt, deciding between the chicken or the salmon for lunch and failing to chat up stewardesses. I once saw the cockpit of a 747 but it was while on a school trip to Spain and the pilot very selfishly failed to get food poisoning and ask me to land the plane and save all the passengers.

You see, the horrible truth is that it doesn't really matter. What is important is how well a flight sim actually *plays*. I've flown a lot of simulated aircraft in my time and seen a lot of games (which, let's face it, is all they are) that really go to town trying to get all of the dynamics as accurate as they possibly can, only to then forget that the average punter is going to be about as knowledgeable about aircraft dynamics as they are about what it's *really* like to battle demons from a parallel dimension.

F16 Fighting Falcon is another member of the 200 pages club. I mean, let's face facts. It's from Digital Integration. When did you last hear of them not being a heavyweight design team? The key thing is that, as with *Apache*, they've managed to balance it with a game that really absorbs you the more you play it. This is mainly down to the fact that they don't just simulate your plane and the components of your mission, but while you're flying from waypoint to



The cloud effects are nicely done and have that rolling feel to them.



(Above) While you're going about your business, you'll find that the world behaves independent of your actions.

waypoint, there's a whole world going on outside your Plexiglas cockpit. Troops march from one engagement to another, trucks travel dusty roads bringing supplies in and out. It all *feels* really good and that's what counts. Not just the thrust-to-lift ratios.

Patching it up

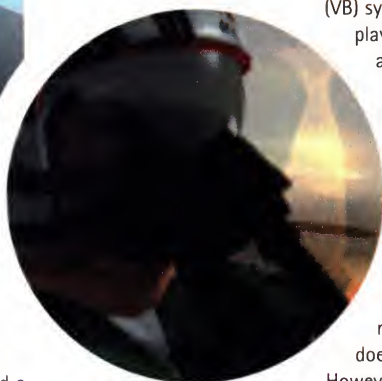
I've always been a big fan of the hi-res polygon over the clunky texture-map. Bitmaps are okay on anything over a P200 with 64Mb of RAM and more 3D accelerator cards than a 3D accelerator card shop, but with anything smaller, as soon as you get closer than a couple of miles to an object you're almost guaranteed to enter Jerkyville, where everything looks like it's buried beneath a patchwork quilt.

F16 adheres firmly to the impressive standards set by *Hind* and *Apache* and then improves on them. Most of the vehicles, weapons and so on are very detailed indeed and only have minute levels of texture-mapping where it's absolutely necessary. On the whole this looks very nice indeed. It keeps the frame rate up, even on less powerful machines (DI claim that with some of the graphics levels turned down *F16* will run fine on a 486DX2 – although I haven't been able to test this yet).

Where it flutters slightly is with the landscape. In order to give the impression of speed at low altitudes you need to be able to see something moving on the ground to give you a sense of, um, ratio (my physics is starting to fail me here, so forgive me if I get some of the terminology wrong). Unfortunately this seems to have been delivered by covering the ground in, you guessed it, a patchwork quilt. While it does give you a sense of speed, it also makes everything look pretty messy at low levels. The buildings and vehicles are all fine. Better than fine, in fact. But the terrain is a bit of a let down, that's all. *A-10 Cuba* seemed to get away without resorting to Quilt Graphics™ and looked all the better for it. It doesn't affect the impressive gameplay in



(Above) The cockpit is a fully virtual model that lets you look outside at any angle while still keeping all the dials and knobs working.



any way, but I thought it worth mentioning. Chances are you won't care one way or the other, but there you go.

I have a dream...

Many years ago, long before my soul had been tarnished by the godless practices of this games industry, I had a dream. It involved the Battersea Power Station, a raft of networked computers, the latest in military simulation software and a large staff. It was going to be a sort of simulated warzone holiday camp. People would book in for a week, sign up for either the army or air force, spend a day in basic training and then fight a co-ordinated campaign over the next six days. Everything would be linked, helicopter pilots would support tank commanders in the field while fighter pilots battled for air supremacy. Even the outside grounds would be used by foot soldiers in giant paintball games, everything all linked to the central computers. It would be a bit like *Westworld* but without a psychotic Yul Brynner robot killing off all the punters.

Of course, I was 14 and had about £32.50 to my name so nothing ever came of it. The reason I mention it though is because of DI's Virtual Battlefield

(VB) system. With their *Hind* and *Apache* games, players could network their machines together and play against each other. *F16* is also networkable (up to 16 players competing in deathmatches and capture the flags, or working together) but you can't link into the VB and fly around in human-controlled helicopters. DI claim they tried to implement the idea but couldn't get the gameplay to work adequately enough. Understandable from one point of view I suppose. A helicopter probably has about as much chance against an *F16* as Prince Naseem does against me (he's a wimp, apparently).

However, I'd would've liked the chance. I get the feeling that co-operative games would've worked pretty well, the *Apaches* flying in to clear away enemy air defences before the *F16*s swoop in and bomb the hell out of the area and so on. But it's not to be. A shame, but it's nothing to really get worked up about. The proof of this particular pudding is when you're in the cockpit, and it has to be said that the AI of the enemy pilots, gunners and other troops is good enough to give you a real challenge. Networking is an optional extra. Nice to have, but hardly essential.

So all in all...

F16 Fighting Falcon is the latest in a long line of top flight sims from a company that I often feel would have to work especially hard to even come close to making a bad game. Even that £4.99 *Merlin Challenge* thing (which simply asked you to land a helicopter on a moving ship) was damn good fun. This is simply the best *F16* simulator currently available and is likely to remain that way for some time. Accurate modelling (so I'm assured) coupled with excellent gameplay. The best of both worlds. **B**



(Top left) The intro sequence sets the scene nicely and even comes close to putting *Top Gun* (the film) to shame in terms of pace and dramatic tension. (Above right) Ooh, it's so tempting. I've a missile ready and everything.

In Perspective

The last *F16* simulator to really make waves was *Falcon 3* – but *F16 Fighting Falcon* is simply better in every way. *A-10 Cuba* has a similar polygon-based look and just has the edge in this area. Both play as well as each other though, so all you have to decide is which plane you'd rather fly.

F16 Fighting Falcon

Falcon 3

A-10 Cuba

Tornado

Su27 Flanker

Tech Specs

Memory: 16Mb

Processor: Pentium recommended

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Mouse, joystick, keyboard, rudder, flightsticks



Score

Does for the *F16* what *Tornado* did for the, er, *Tornado*.



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Speedster



(Above) The blue car tried to cut inside the grey car. The grey car countered by accelerating to 29 mph.

The game's called *Speedster*, which means it's going to be really fast, right? Er, wrong actually. **Duncan MacDonald** reckons it should've been called *Mogadon Racers* instead, and here's why...

I'VE OWNED LOADS OF SHITE CARS IN my time, but one of the worst was an old 'P' reg Triumph Dolomite. It would've been crap enough had it been in pristine condition, but I happened to be on the dole at the time and couldn't afford to have anything on it fixed. Six months after purchase the clutch got so sloppy that faced with a hill of anything over one degree's inclination, I'd have to pick up as much speed as possible and then change frantically down through the gears in the hope that I'd reach the top before the car ground to a halt. Why am I telling you this? Well, imagine I'm being filmed doing this by a helicopter, à la Police, Camera, Action. Not very exciting, agreed? Exactly. And, unfortunately, *Speedster* feels very much like this.



(Above left) The cars raced fearlessly down the straight at 23 mph. (Above right) Alistair Stewart: "Such carnage! It's just the kind of result the police expect... some of these reckless fools were travelling at nearly 38 mph."

Er, it's slow then?

You bet it's slow. But, worse than that, it's also deeply uninvolved. What you get, basically, are eight tracks and eight cars (four sports jobs and four off-roaders, with 'secret' cars up for grabs as per usual). Then you get your different race modes, of which you'll be yawningly familiar: Championship, Single Race or Time Trial (where there's a ghost car, should you toggle it). Not exactly original territory, to be sure, but the selling point of *Speedster* is its viewpoint. Look at the screenshots. Yup, we're in overhead helicopter cam territory, and nothing wrong with that... after all, remember *Micro Machines*? A bloody brilliant game. But where *Micro Machines* was frenetic, and had loads of 'character' and whatnot, *Speedster* is a big snooze, with nothing in the way of 'grooviness'. The graphics are great, admittedly, but the game doesn't really use them to any effect and, unforgivably, actually allows them at times to interfere with the already sagging gameplay. "Where am I supposed to go now?" was one common cry here in the office, often followed with "Aaaah, under that bridge perhaps!" Wrong! You see, from way up in the air, one man's bridge is another man's crash barrier. Obviously perseverance with the game would lead to one gradually memorising the tricky twists and turns of each particular track, but then we get back to the slothful gameplay, meaning one would never get that far due to lack of interest. Lo-res, incidentally, runs a deal faster than hi-res, but looks crap and is confusing (seeing as everything's so wee). Nevertheless, all this slagging has, so far, been about the one-player game. So what of the two-player? That must be fun, surely?

You are feeling sleepy...

Selecting split-screen mode, selecting sportsters and the so-called 'fast' racetrack, I went head-to-head with Chris Anderson (deputy ed). Game on. Acceleration of 0 to 60 in about nine years. By the time I hit the first bend I noticed Chris's car wasn't visible on my side of the monitor. Ha ha! I was winning then. Had he crashed? I turned to see what he was up to, and he was, er, asleep on his chair. Then I fell asleep too. We both slept soundly till the next day. (I exaggerate, obviously, but not by much.) We couldn't even wind the window down and get some fresh air. Don't try this on an empty stomach. **2**



In Perspective

Although it sports inferior graphics, *Micro Machines* is still bloody good fun, very addictive, and has a fab two-player mode. *Big Red Racing* is a more traditional racing game with variable views and, like *Micro Machines*, has a split-screen mode. It 'feels' like *Micro Machines* in a weird way, and is therefore bloody good fun. *Speedster* SHOULD be good, but lacks 'sparkle' and is about as much fun as driving a Robin Reliant around Tesco's.

Micro Machines

Big Red Racing

Speedster

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb recommended)

Processor: P90

Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, joystick, joystick



Score

Looks brilliant as a screenshot, but plays like a sloth in a vat of treacle.



Price: £39.99

Release date: Late May

Publisher: Psygnosis

Telephone: 0151 282 3000

Website: <http://www.psygnosis.com>

dan The People's Choice
Personal Computers

Redneck Rampage



You sure are a pretty boy, Charlie Brooker. A city boy. Now why don't you jus' drop them pants? Squeaaal, piggy! Squeeeaaall!!

7

THINK I'VE FINALLY REACHED THE POINT of no return. I've played so many Doom-a-likes now that I'm finding it hard to tell the difference between computerised

fantasy and cold hard reality. Every morning I wake up, open my eyes, and think "Oh no, not another first-person 3D game." I look all around me in a paranoid fashion each time I walk down a corridor. I spend hours walking into the walls around my flat, pushing against them and grunting, in a vain search for 'secret areas'. I obsessively collect first-aid boxes. And I machine-gun loads of people to death every day.

Yet still the 3D shoot 'em ups keep on coming. Since none of them are a patch on *Quake* (except perhaps *Scourge Of Armagon*, which is a patch for *Quake*), any new addition into this overcrowded genre needs a pretty flashy gimmick if it wants to turn the average gamer's head. Last month we had LucasArts' *Outlaws*, which specialised in Spaghetti Western imagery and 'realistic' gunplay. This month brings us Interplay's *Redneck Rampage* - which specialises in swearwords and in-breeding. You are now entering a taste-free zone, ladies and gentlemen.

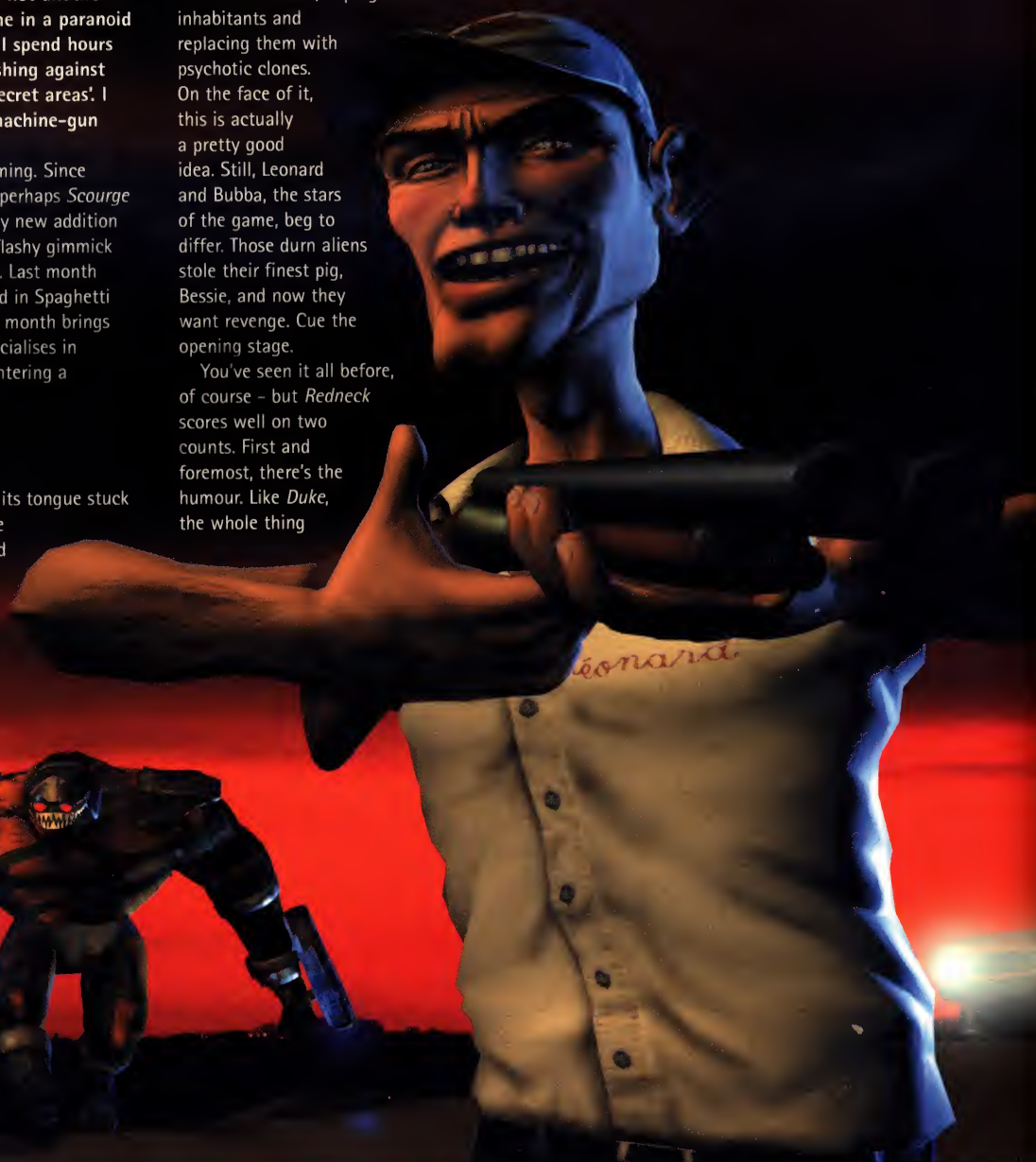
Kentucky Fried Carnage

It's a bloody good laugh, really. *Redneck* has its tongue stuck so firmly in its cheek, it looks like it's got the mumps. The action takes place in and around Hickston, an area populated by the kind of poor white trash who regularly take the starring role in 'reality TV' shows such as *Cops* (usually drop-down drunk,

flailing their fists around, and hollering abuse in a desperately pathetic manner). We're talking trailer parks and bowling alleys, drive-in movie theatres and pig farms. People called 'Emmy Sue' and 'Jim Bob'. Generations of in-breeding have caused evolution to hit reverse, leaving a generation of hybrid man-apes with an average IQ so low, they'd consider Geoff Capes a 'high-falutin' interlect-u-all'. Ignorant and insular, with a deep mistrust of anyone who 'ain't from round these parts' and helplessly addicted to incest, they're much like the Cornish, really, but with far cooler accents.

Anyway, the story revolves around an alien invasion; a bunch of unscrupulous intergalactic pig-rustlers are running amok in Hickston, wiping out the inhabitants and replacing them with psychotic clones. On the face of it, this is actually a pretty good idea. Still, Leonard and Bubba, the stars of the game, beg to differ. Those darn aliens stole their finest pig, Bessie, and now they want revenge. Cue the opening stage.

You've seen it all before, of course - but *Redneck* scores well on two counts. First and foremost, there's the humour. Like *Duke*, the whole thing





(Above) Bowlin' ball hurlin' tomfoolery as you take a break from all that redneck killin'.



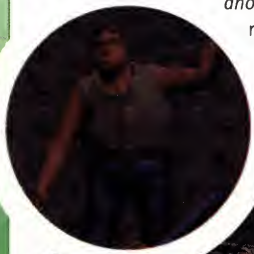
plays a bit like some kind of manic, gore-encrusted cartoon for adults – but unlike *Duke*, 'adult' doesn't mean indefensible violence against passive, scantily-clad women (why that sick rubbish got past the censors is beyond me). What you get here is the opportunity to explore each and every hillbilly cliché you've ever heard – with a shotgun in your hand and

a swearword on your lips (there's plenty of cussin' on the soundtrack – and you can even download a special 'extra bad language' pack from the Interplay Website – www.interplay.com). Instead of armour, you shield yourself from harm with an alcoholic glow, by swigging 'Cheap Ass Whiskey' or chug-a-lugging a six-pack. Drink too much, however, and you lose control for a while – which is where the food comes in (it helps you to line your stomach). The entire game is an unstoppable whirlwind of slack-jawed bumpkins, exploding barnyard animals, hilarious sound effects, turd-hurling alien critters, and comedic ultra-violence. In that respect, it can't fail to entertain. Multi-player mode should be hilarious (we'll be covering this, and other multi-player titles, in a forthcoming *On-line* feature).

Squeal, piggy

The second thing in *Redneck's* favour is the look and feel of each level. The opening stage is distinctly unimpressive, but don't let that fool you; further into the game there are some breathtaking moments. It's not a 'true' 3D game à la *Quake*, but the team have obviously made the most of the engine as it stands. It's designed to run at 640x480, and it does, smoothly. Some of the wall textures look eerily realistic – lighting effects are used intelligently throughout, and the levels themselves contain far more 'puzzles' than you might expect; aside from the usual key-collecting sorties, there are sections where a flair for lateral thinking and a nimble proficiency for multiple platform-hopping are essential. One new feature, which I don't recall seeing in a *Nukem* clone before, is the ability to push certain objects around (usually to enable you to jump a large gap), although this is more of a pain in the arse than anything else. Indeed, on certain stages, it's sometimes too hard to work out how you're supposed to make progress, so you'll need a fairly high tolerance for failure (although there are plenty of guns to help you vent that frustration whenever you see fit). Still, all things considered, the levels are great. So there's another plus point.

In fact, the only *bad* thing about *Redneck Rampage* is simply that at the end of the day, it's yet another 3D shoot 'em up. There's no real genre progression going on here, no major surprises. Just a good, strong exercise in farcical entertainment. **Z**



(Top) Take that, you fat bastard! (Above) These inbreds are certainly well read by the look of that library.

Ha bloody ha

Here, for the record, is a list of some of *Redneck Rampage's* funniest 'features'. As you can see, it's not entirely conventional...

- The soundtrack's hilarious. Aside from the endless, droning Deep South soundbites – "Ahm-a gonna gitche, bwoy! Ahm-a gonna gitche!" – there's a looping musical soundtrack supplied by the likes of rockabilly sleaze-merchants Mojo Nixon and The Reverend Horton Heat. The songs all have titles like "Baby's Liquored Up" and "Nurture My Pig", and provide ideal backing for a summer afternoon spent a-drinkin' and a-shootin'.
- If you press the 'Y' key, your character yells "Yee-haww!" and you gain one health point.
- Similarly, press the tilde key (~), and you take a leak on the floor.
- It's possible to drink or eat too much, leading to drunken stumbling or flatulence.
- It's got loads of swearing in it.
- There's a bit where you get to go bowling.
- You can blow up the farm animals.
- One of the weapons is a rapid-fire bra.
- The houses have truly appalling, tasteless decor.
- Some of the monsters are made of shit.
- There's a hilarious 'Southern Sheriff' character.
- To end each level, you have to smack an idiot savant named 'Bubba' in the face with a crowbar.

No, really.

In Perspective

Someone's hit the 'diarrhoea' button on the great 'First-person shoot 'em up' arse in the sky. With *Outlaws* last month, *Redneck Rampage* right now, and *Blood*, *Hexen II*, *Unreal*, *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Prey* and John Romero's *Daikatana* still to come, there's going to be a gore-encrusted log-jam. Me, I'm waiting for *Quake II*.

Redneck Rampage

Duke Nukem 3D

Outlaws

Quake

Hexen

3D Monster Maze (ZX81)

Tech Specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb for Win 95)

Processor: Pentium 90

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard/mouse



Score

It's darn good fun... but it ain't exactly original.



Price: £39.99

Release date: Out now

Publisher: Interplay/Xatrix

Website: <http://www.interplay.com>

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Review ZONE Extra!

LINKS 5 COURSE LIBRARIES (VOLS. 1, 2 & 3)

Okay. This isn't a review of *Links*. I'm not going to start ranting on about how utterly ordinary Access's golf sim actually is, how difficult it is to judge any kind of power in your shots, how irritating it is waiting for each screen to redraw, how user-unfriendly it is compared to other golf titles, and how it's little more than a graphics feast for high-end machines. No. This is a review of three extra course discs for those of you who were silly enough to have bought the thing and now want more fairways to hack your way around. So I won't be mentioning any of that negative stuff at all. Much.

What can I say? There are extra courses. Five on each of the three discs. Such classic courses as Troon North, The Belfry, Firestone Country Club, Barton Creek and Mauna Key, among others, are all there for your recreational pleasure. All are hyper-accurate in their recreation (although the only one that I actually have experience of is The Belfry, having once been there in the crowd at a Ryder Cup tournament) and are lovely to look at. I wouldn't have minded seeing more European and British courses, but you can't have everything I suppose. Each disc supports all known versions of the *Links* game (even on the Mac) but the rather useful fly-bys are sorely absent, which is a bit annoying.

The courses themselves play well enough and are certainly varied enough to keep you going at them for some time (obviously I'm speaking to



Mauna Key, Hawaii. Apparently it's carved out of molten lava. Which makes the bunkers pretty tough, so stay on the fairway and out of the rough (erhh... sorry).

You've leafed through the main reviews section, so now read about the games that we were still desperate to tell you about.

those of you that actually like the game here and don't mind the cumbersome controls), and you do get a good sense of the individual characteristics of each course.

And, well, that's pretty much it. Fifteen extra courses. If you want some, here they are. If you don't, well there you go.

Paul Presley



Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
Price: £24.99
Tel: 0181 780 2222

70

Hole 1 at The Belfry. I once stood just over to the left of that tree there. (Show off - Ed)

PC Zone almost recommends

SENTIENT

I sort of knew I was playing a Psygnosis game pretty early on with *Sentient*. I'd been playing the thing for around 15 minutes and I was still watching the introductory animation. *Sentient* is what you might describe as being a 'noble effort', though. It tries, at least, to be rather different from most other games around at the moment, taking a first-person *Quake*-style view (although not quite as advanced) and matching it to a deep and involving role-playing adventure, as opposed to a killathon. In fact, it's more along the lines of Origin's old classic, *System Shock*.

You play the part of a new arrival to a troubled spacestation and quickly find yourself in trouble when your shuttle crashes during docking. From there you have to deal with a mysterious virus attacking the crew and the sudden loss of the station's orbital path (putting it on a direct collision course with the sun), as well as a host of minor sub-plots stemming from each of the station's 60-odd inhabitants.

Everything happens in real time and as with all good RPGs, *Sentient* has a fully realised 'world' taking place around you. Characters will behave independently of your actions. They all have their own 'lives' and you can interact with them as much or as little as you like. Essentially though, the more you put into the game the more you'll get out of it. There's the main plotline to deal with, of course, but you always feel as though there's something going on, wherever you are.

Where *Sentient* fails is in its control method. It's also being released on the PlayStation and you get



(Above) I get the feeling that Drum will execute anything given half a chance.
(Left) Ben Kingsley makes a welcome return to our screens.



the feeling that the PC version was a kind of younger brother during development, as the controls seem very much geared towards the PlayStation gamepad. Sadly, on the PC it's

very fiddly and would have benefited from a complete system overhaul. It's a great shame because *Sentient* is in essence a very decent game indeed. It's just that the suspicion keeps resurfacing at the back of your mind that you should buy a PlayStation instead if you want to really enjoy it.

Paul Presley

Publisher: Psygnosis
Price: £39.99
Tel: 0151 282 3000

74

3D ULTRA MINIGOLF

One of the biggest problems with computer golf sims is that developers have yet to come up with a truly playable putting system. It's quite daft really – you'd think that a game that relies so heavily on being able to putt the ball might prompt someone to devise something a little more original than a click-click powerbar. In an effort to make their golf game more challenging, Sierra have developed a mouse-swing-controlled interface that the player can use as well as the more common powerbar interface. It's been adopted in other golf games over the last couple of months with limited success, but it seems to work here because you're not actually hitting the ball that far, so there's less room for error. It might seem a little tricky at first, but the truth is it works pretty damn well and makes what might have been a very dull game indeed far more entertaining.

The trouble is that deep down, in its heart of hearts, *Minigolf* (or crazy golf as it's called over here) is little more than a novelty pursuit at the best of times. At the end of the day, it's really quite limited, and that's the problem with this game. You putt a ball through an obstacle course, and move onto the next hole.



(Main pic) I hope that boot has spikes on its soles. (Top right) I'm not sure what the official rulebook says, but I think dinosaurs count as a par four. (Bottom right) Get a hole in one and the rocket takes off. If only NASA was run like this.



There's no driving into the wind, carefully selecting your club, negotiating sand traps and winning trophies. Two-player games are fun, but only on a very basic level. Having said that, considering the price, *Minigolf* is fun, colourful and mildly entertaining – albeit only for a certain timespan.

Paul Presley

Publisher: Sierra
Price: £14.99
Tel: 0118 920 9100

70

THE LAST EXPRESS

As with *Sentient* (reviewed opposite), I've got a lot of respect for what Bröderbund have attempted to do with

The Last Express. Also, like *Sentient*, it's a very nice game with one rather annoying flaw. Essentially a first-person perspective adventure game, it relates the story of the last journey of the Orient Express in 1914 and features all the classic elements of the period – namely romance, intrigue, murder and mystery. The key difference here though is that everything seems



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PC Zone recommends

ACTUA SOCCER CLUB EDITION

The original *Actua Soccer* broke the mould into thousands of pieces in terms of graphics and playability, successfully bridging the gulf between the super-slick presentation of *FIFA Soccer* and the instant accessibility and playability of *Sensible Soccer*.

Sporting fully motion-captured players, an instinctive control system and a match commentary by Barry Davies, even the most die-hard *Sensi* addict couldn't fail to be impressed. Sure, it had its problems – the goalkeepers made even David James look good and although the AI had one or two interesting little quirks that left you feeling more frustrated than Bryan Robson, it soon became the benchmark football game by which all others were judged. Gremlin did their best to address most of the criticisms levelled at *Actua* when the game was released under the banner of *Euro 96*, but it still failed to live up to the massive expectations. The AI had been quirked, the keepers had obviously had their gloved knuckles rapped and the players stayed on their feet just a little longer, but it wasn't perfect. *Actua Soccer Club Edition* uses the same engine and AI as *Euro 96* which means it still suffers the same problems. However, the fact that you can now play as your favourite English club side and that *Actua Soccer* is still the most playable and best-looking football game available for the PC makes this something of an essential purchase if you don't already own *Actua Soccer* or *Euro 96*. If you do, wait for *Actua Soccer 2* (which looks awesome, incidentally) – it's due for release in the autumn.

Jeremy Wells

Publisher: Gremlin Interactive

Price: £24.99

Tel: 01142 753423

80



**PC
ZONE**
Recommended



Graphically, there's little to touch *Actua Soccer Club Edition*. It's more detailed and flowing than both *Kick Off 97* and *FIFA Soccer* and infinitely more playable, despite its faults.



Jordan Mechner
Designer/Director/Co-Writer
Smoking Car Productions



(Above) Jordan Mechner talks about *The Last Express*. This guy created *Prince Of Persia*, you know. (Top right) Murder! On the Orient Express no less! Quelle surprise! (Right) Before automated ticket barriers, fare-dodging was something of an artform.



◀ to happen in real time. As you wander around various areas of the train, all the other characters lead their own lives and have their own individual goals. Events happen at scheduled times and, depending on your actions, can change with each game.

In a sense, it works very well indeed. It's very captivating, very atmospheric – the sense of 'being there' is very nicely achieved – and has a plot that really does draw you in. The only thing going against it is the very odd graphical style used throughout. It's not exactly what you'd call fluid animation and it's not still screens, but a kind of stop-motion effect which is unfortunately very offputting after a very short while. However, if you can put up with it, *The Last Express* is very rewarding. Be patient and you'll find it bold, brave and innovative. Which makes a change these days.

Paul Presley

Publisher: Brøderbund

Price: £39.95

Tel: 01429 273029

72

ABSOLUTE BEDLAM

Here we have the very model of a perfectly good game. It's supremely adequate in all departments, but it's been pipped to the post. *Syndicate Wars* has covered the same turf already – and done it all so much better into the bargain. Consequently, I have no alternative but to be negative about a game I'd much rather be nice to.

Players of either Bullfrog's trigger-happy little number or the original *Bedlam* will know the score here: carnage, destruction, explosions, destruction, violence and more carnage. If something is on the screen, it's very likely to explode should you pour enough ammunition into it. The basic task at hand is to take a team of one to three heavily-armed battle robot things (called RATTs) into various warzones to fulfil certain objectives. Rescue missions, intelligence gathering,

Damn, I knew thermal underwear was a mistake on this trip.





(Above) That's for saucing Sigourney Weaver without my express permission, creep. (Far right) *Absolute Bedlam* is perhaps the first game to accurately simulate the beauty that is Doncaster.

equipment retrieval and so on make up the missions, but it wouldn't be amiss to say that every sortie pretty much comes down to laying waste to everything in your path.

At first I got the feeling that I wasn't so much playing the game as just holding down the fire button and letting the game play me (*I don't get that – Ed*). But a few missions in and I started to appreciate the strategy involved. Your weapons have limited reserves of ammo and reloads, but bonuses and power-ups aren't all that frequent, so you do have to start thinking about what you destroy.

It might have been more challenging to make the effects of your destructive tendencies return to haunt you, forcing you to really think about what you're doing. Radar stations could weaken enemy awareness, blowing up water tanks could mean that fires spread more easily and so on. A dynamic background. As it is, there's little to temper your weaponplay other than your supply of ammo.

To be fair, it does sort of grow on you. Even as I write there's a small part of me still wanting to go back and give it one more shot. Unlike *Carmageddon*, *Quake* or indeed, *Syndicate Wars*, it's not the kind of urge that's hard to ignore. As I said at the start, *Absolute Bedlam* is a perfectly good game. It just isn't *Syndicate Wars*, that's all.

Paul Presley

Publisher: Mirage
Price: £24.95
Tel: 01260 299909

71

LOMAX

Oh no, more *Lemmings*? Well, yes and no. *Lomax* is a cutesy-pie platform game from Psygnosis (interestingly, the original *Lemmings* creators DMA Design don't appear to have been involved), which takes the familiar sights and sounds of LemmingLand and applies them to the platform game genre. The end result is something that's halfway between *Rayman* and *Sonic The Hedgehog* in appearance – and gameplay. So, instead of a rip-roaring, ledge-leaping

adventure, the likes of which has never been seen before, we're left with a fairly banal, uninspiring trek through every platform game cliché in the book. In fact, it's so derivative, you could say it was the computer game equivalent of Rory Bremner or Mike Yarwood because it insists on impersonating other titles you've seen and played in the past. Zero points for originality, then. The visuals try hard and the animation is agreeably smooth and enticing, but the lack of a hi-resolution mode (320x200 is as good as it gets, folks) and the paucity of original content marks the entire

project down as something of an also-ran. The heavy-handed concessions to 3D gameplay fail to convince, too. Make no mistake though – I've got nothing against dated games, so long as the gameplay grabs me roughly with both hands and shakes me out of my stupor – something *Lomax* singularly failed to achieve.

Charlie Brooker



(Top) *Lomax* still looks pretty good, but moving it jerks around like a two-dollar whore. (Above) Get down – you green-haired little bleeder! (Right) Very, very reminiscent of Ubi Soft's *Rayman*, *Lomax* isn't nearly half as good. Even though it's not French.



Publisher: Psygnosis
Price: TBC
Tel: 0151 282 3000

66

AXCELERATOR

Encouragingly, 21st Century have recently started branching out and producing games other than their usual, standard pinball simulation fare. First we had *Synergist*, an adventure game (which was, er, a bit on the ungood side) – and now they're bringing us *Axcelerator* (which is, er, a bit on the ungood side).

Axcelerator is a mix of high-octane, high-tech motor racing, and good old-fashioned physical unpleasantness, though here it's against other cars and not hapless pedestrians – which sort of marks it down as *Carmageddon Lite* before it's even started.

Following an absurdly long intro (so long, in fact, it could have been directed by Sir Richard Attenborough, although *Mad Max*-style car-crunching action isn't quite his forté), you're ushered into a grungy bar which doubles as the main menu. From here you can drive your way through a time



PC Zone almost recommends

QAD: THE QUINTESSENTIAL ART OF DESTRUCTION

Cranberry Source's *QAD* really is 'kicking it old-school', as they say. What we have here is a game possessing no extraneous glitz – just a 3D engine, simple gameplay concepts and a bare-bones control interface. Considering *QAD* is the brainchild of veteran coder Jon Ritman, this comes as no surprise.

What does come as a surprise though, is that the finished *QAD* – a no-frills search 'n' destroy, 3D action game which has spent almost two years in the making – hasn't turned out to be the classic we were all expecting.

Despite the introduction of advanced 3D graphics programming techniques, *QAD* looks decidedly dated in appearance. In VGA the whole thing is plain but functional and moves at an acceptable rate. The varied waves of attacking enemies also lack credibility – some of them wobble around like Ed Woodian flying saucers on strings. Even the hi-res option does little to enhance the overall aesthetics.

At first it's also extremely disorientating, but it's not the mouse-driven first-person interface that's the problem. You can fly around, stumble upon some hostages, pick them up etc, no problem – but it's near-impossible to find your way back to base to drop them off. Some sort of compass on the HUD would have helped here, because the line of sight radar was next to bloody useless, and flying blind using the 'live' isometric map sort of defeats the object.

There are two introductory levels which have been designed to ease players into the single-player side of things, after which *QAD* gets



very hard, very quickly – especially when bigger weapons are introduced into the game. Your opponent also has access to these weapons and works very aggressively indeed. Raid their base for hostages later on and they'll steam over and destroy you in seconds if you're slow. Practise, as I did, and you'll get better at the game and learn to fight back.

With in-game techno (supplied by DJ Food) turned up full and comfortable seating position assumed, *QAD* can become quite a captivating experience: skidding around colourful mountain ranges, shooting ridiculous enemies and what have you. There is some fun to be had – in the short term, at least. Long-term playability I'd say is hampered by a few niggly faults (getting 'stuck' to ground objects like your base, for example), a not quite perfect game engine and the repetitive nature of the gameplay.

Paul Mallinson

Publisher: Philips Media

Price: £TBC

Tel: 0181 343 9373

77



(Top left and right) You spend a large amount of time staring at your base. (Above) Succeed and it's off to the stars for more hostage rescuing.



(Left) Dropped from a great height – like this game should be...
(Below) It feels like you're driving a breeze block around an icerink.
(Below right) Despite the varied nature of *Axcelerator's* courses, it's still a bunch of arse.



trial, a head-to-head duel, or a full-on grand prix replete with extra death and crashing. You can also upgrade your car, buy weaponry, or stare at the immense, wobbling cleavage (it really does wobble) of the woman behind the bar. If you're smart, though, you'll choose 'exit' and spare yourself the depressing spectacle that follows.



You see, the problem is that *Axcelerator* blows. Compare it with *Screamer* or even Gremlin's *Fatal Racing* and you can't help feeling a little short-changed. The graphics are okay (with a 3D accelerator they're superb in places), but that's about it. The main fault lies in the handling – it's truly atrocious. At no point was I even remotely convinced that I was actually controlling a car. It's a pity, because there's evidence that the developers have paid lots of attention to all the other aspects of the game (except the unforgivably poor sound effects). In its current state, even the addition of full-on loop-the-loops in some of the tracks can't salvage things. Come on guys, you can do better than this.

Publisher: 21st Century

Price: TBA

Tel: 01235 851852

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THEATRE OF PAIN

Sounds like an old Vincent Price movie, but alas it's not. *Theatre Of Pain* is a fighting game which, according to the



press release "cannot be seen to have that much competition on the PC". Hmm. Still, here's what you get for your money – a fairly sluggish beat 'em up which seems to have been heavily influenced by Capcom's *X-Men* arcade game. Make no mistake, some of the visuals are fantastic – the fighters (2D sprites, rendered from incredibly well-designed 3D models) in particular look really cool, like grungy 2000AD anti-heroes springing into life. Sadly, this doesn't translate into high-quality gameplay – it's all fairly standard, despite the inclusion of an apparently innovative 'anti-stabbing system' (something which should be

issued as standard to all London school teachers, not squandered in trivial computer games). The days of the 2D beat 'em up have been numbered for some time now, and it's simply impossible to get excited about a product like this, pretty combatants and all. *Mirage* have had plenty of practice at producing easy-on-the-eye, dull-on-the-wits combat titles (such as the notorious cack-carnival that was *Rise Of The Robots*), and you'd have thought by now they'd have got the message and given the PC gaming public what they really, really want – a fast-paced, 3D fist-frenzy to rival *Tekken 2* on the PlayStation. The best

we have to date is the now ancient *FX Fighter* and more recently *Virtual Fighter* which is pretty mediocre unless you have a 3D accelerator card stuffed inside your Pentium. Judging by the models used to create the sprites, *Mirage* have the benefit of some top-notch 3D designers on the payroll – so how about applying their undeniable talents to something a little more up to date? We're waiting. Impatiently.

Charlie Brooker

Publisher: Mirage
Price: £24.95
Tel: 01260 299909

65



(Above left) As you'd expect, there are a whole host of special moves and combos just waiting to be discovered.

(Above right) Character detail is high, but it's still not 3D, is it?

(Above) Two-player games are playable enough, just a bit limited.

GRAND PRIX 1

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Budget ZONE

In conjunction with this month's HotWired CD, **Steve Hill** takes an exclusive look at Virgin's White Label range and picks out ten of the bargain re-releases that no PC gamer should be without. If you're not convinced, check out the playable demos on this month's CD and see for yourself just how well these games have stood the test of time.



DARK FORCES

A timely re-release in view of the pending *Jedi Knight*, the original *Dark Forces* thrust the traditional first-person perspective 3D action game into the *Star Wars* universe with some style. As a mercenary working for the Rebel Alliance (the pyjama-wearing good guys), you are required to infiltrate the Empire's headquarters and steal the design plans to the Death Star. En route you will encounter Storm Troopers and other characters from the films, including that toaster on wheels that makes a fleeting appearance in the first movie. Sadly there's no network option, but as a one-player game it doesn't get much better.

Verdict: It's just like being in the film. No, really.

Price: £12.99

SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

A classic, nay legendary, old-school point-and-click cartoon adventure featuring an unorthodox detective duo of a dog and a rabbit, operating as self-styled freelance police. Veteran gamers still get misty-eyed over this one, and justifiably so, as it easily manages to hold its own against the

(Left) *Dark Forces* will fill the gap nicely until *Jedi Knight* arrives.

current crop of trendy rendered affairs. The titular pairing get themselves embroiled in all manner of hi-jinks and scrapes throughout the course of the adventure, and the banter between them is incessant. The game involves the usual routine of solving bizarre puzzles, and is packed with more gags than a roomful of hostages.

Verdict: Let the dog see rabbit.

Price: £12.99

FLIGHT UNLIMITED

No guns, bombs, missiles, flares or even chaff are in evidence in this flight sim, which may deter enthusiasts of explosions and death. What you do have though is an incredibly realistic flight model and some genuinely amazing graphics. Cunning stunts are the order of the day as the player is invited to pilot a variety of light aircraft around various parts of America, which have been photo-realistically mapped from the actual locations. Points are awarded for the intricacy of manoeuvres successfully completed and, with practice, budding Gary Numans can soon be displaying the airborne skills of an ace pilot.

Verdict: Still looks fantastic.

Price: £12.99

(Below) Legendary freelance police duo Sam & Max on the trail of a rat.



Break wind in *Flight Unlimited* and open a window to let the smell out...



SCREAMER

Although now superseded by its highly impressive sequel, the original *Screamer* raised numerous eyebrows at the time and can still hold its own in the field of arcade racing games. Taking the wheel of a high-powered vehicle, there's no more to *Screamer* than haring around like a blue-arsed fly, overtaking other cars and taking care not to slam into any brick walls. The variety of tracks is impressive, from mountainous landscapes to inner city affairs, with one even featuring a trackside fairground. The graphics are exemplary, it's supremely addictive, and the whole thing shifts like the proverbial turd off a spade.

Verdict: Top-notch arcade racer.

Price: £12.99



TERRA NOVA

Although not quite a household name, *Terra Nova* slipped out a year or so ago to much critical acclaim. As the leader of an elite fighting team of four, you are encased in some fairly heavy-duty battle armour and required to undergo a number of dangerous missions, encompassing recon, search and rescue, night raids and some full-on battles. A combination of violence and strategy, the action is viewed from within your visor and you have various weapons at your disposal. There are 30 pre-defined missions to contend with, as well as a random scenario generator. In short, the thinking man's *Doom*.

Verdict: Interesting, and occasionally exciting.

Price: £12.99

MONKEY ISLAND 1 & 2

Two for the price of considerably less than one must represent one of the bargains of the year, and should more than whet the appetite for the forthcoming LucasArts release, *The Curse Of Monkey Island*. The first game was a genre-defining title, introducing the bizarre Guybrush Threepwood to

(Left) Underrated blasting action in *Terra Nova* from Looking Glass.



the world at large. Although naturally it looks a little dated now, there are still countless hours of adventuring fun to be had, complemented by some pounding reggae music: *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* sported re-vamped graphics, a new interface and was about as impressive as sequels get, with more pirate-based shenanigans and plenty of humour.

Verdict: Two classic games. You lucky people.
Price: £14.99



SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

Anyone with a vague interest in football games must have played the legendary *Sensi* in at least one of its various incarnations. It looks ridiculously primitive in comparison to the flock of motion-captured efforts currently flooding the market, but the titchy players with bug eyes and mad grins have a unique charm that no other game has come close to. The gameplay is swift and instinctive, and multi-player tournaments can take days out of your life. As for the management option, it's simple but effective, and there's always time for one more game. Go on, treat yourself.

Verdict: Every home should have one.
Price: £12.99

STAR TREK 25TH ANNIVERSARY

Take the original cast of *Star Trek*, shove 'em in a special adventure to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the series (the Trekkers out there are

no doubt aware that we have since parted through the 30th anniversary... bit of an old 'un, this), and you get a game that's still a very decent point-and-clicker regardless of its age. The presentation manages to conjure up the spirit of the original series, while the voice-acting from the now somewhat crumbly mob of Trekkers is second to none. A must-buy for Shatner/Nimoy fans.

Verdict: True Trekkers love Shatner.
Price: £12.99

FULL THROTTLE

Quite possibly one of the coolest adventure games ever, *Full Throttle* marked a return to everything that made the traditional point-and-clicker so popular. With numerous clever puzzles, cartoonish graphics to die for and a voice-over cast that included Mark Hamill, it's still one of the best point-and-click adventures available. Innovative arcade diversions and a near-perfect learning curve made it an instant classic when it was released back in 1995. It's still up there with the best of them and the only downer is that it just isn't long enough.

Verdict: Proof that computer games can be cool.
Price: £12.99

TIE FIGHTER COLLECTOR'S SERIES

The boot is firmly on the other foot with this one, which gives the player a chance to join the Dark Side and kick the arses of those poncey Rebels. Go on, admit it, the Empire always



Also worth a look

- ALONE IN THE DARK
- CANNON FODDER 2
- DAWN PATROL
- DAY OF THE TENTACLE ▶
- DUNE
- X-WING COLLECTOR'S EDITION
- HAND OF FATE
- LANDS OF LORE
- NASCAR RACING
- SHADOW OF THE COMET
- STAR TREK JUDGEMENT RITES
- NAVY STRIKE



For further information contact Virgin Interactive Entertainment on 0171 368 2255.



(Above) Stony-faced dialogue in LucasArts' *Full Throttle*.

looked a lot cooler and you always wanted a chance to twat Luke Skywalker. *TIE Fighter* lets you do just that, and is still an impressive game with one-off missions that take you straight into the action, a compelling campaign and a useful training mode. Graphically, it may look a little sparse when compared with the gloriously texture-mapped

X Vs *TIE*, but it still sports one of the finest space combat engines ever developed. All the extra missions are included on this re-release, making it a double bargain.

Verdict: Top atmospheric *Star Wars* gubbins. Join us.
Price: £12.99

(Below) Is *TIE Fighter* still the best *Star Wars* game? We think so.



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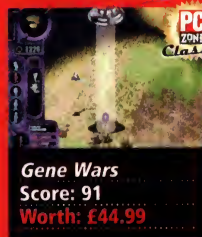
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Tech

ZONE

MMX: Heaven or hype?

Intel's MMX chip was greeted with open arms by most games publishers when it was released. But how does the chip perform against the recent wave of 3D accelerator cards?

THE HYPE THAT accompanied the release of the MMX chip was pretty astonishing. Intel were telling everyone in the games industry that the new chip would bring better and faster graphics to PC games as well as enhancing in-game sound into the bargain. The first games company to announce support for this technology was Ubi Soft and *Pod*, their rather smart driving game, came in for review with support for not only MMX, but Direct3D and 3Dfx as well.

We had a mix-up in the office when the screenshots for *Pod* came in. It was blatantly obvious which screenshots were taken from the 3Dfx version (the 3Dfx version of *Pod* looks gorgeous), but we were damned if we could tell the difference between the normal version and the MMX version because there was virtually no difference between their respective graphics. This didn't exactly tie in with Intel's claims that MMX would bring greatly improved graphics to PC games. Since then, we've seen several other games with MMX support and to be honest, it's the same story every time. To be fair to Intel, MMX *does* accelerate games to a large extent, but if you want stunning visuals, you're going to need a 3Dfx or PowerVR card in your machine as well.

In truth then, MMX is best thought of as a handy companion to your existing graphics set-up as opposed to a suitable substitute for it. The PowerVR card in particular will benefit greatly from the considerable acceleration MMX brings to PC games. Look out for part two of our 3D feature in about three months time when we'll be looking at all these issues in great detail.



Chris Anderson



Pod was the first game to use MMX technology.

Voodoo Rush vs Apocalypse 3Dx



IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE SINCE we've had cause to discuss 3D graphics hardware, the reason being that there's plenty of hardware out there, but still bugger all software to take advantage of it. If you spent a

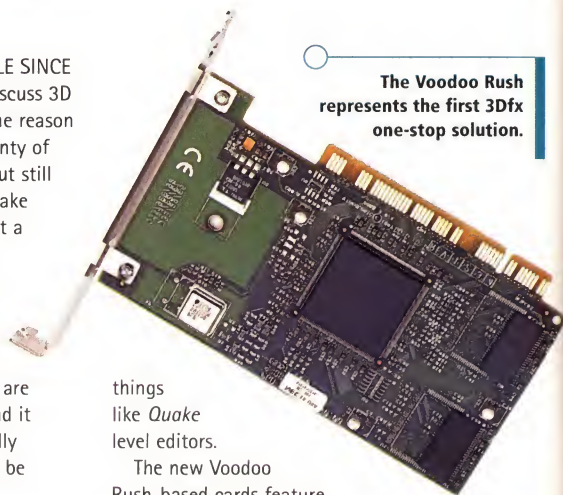
couple of hundred quid on a card a few months ago, you're probably feeling a bit conned, as very few of the games on those long lists that the card manufacturers have been chucking about have actually been released. Things are finally looking up this summer, though, and it seems as if the games companies are finally getting their act together, so there should be a decent choice by the end of the year.

In the meantime, VideoLogic and 3Dfx have decided to confuse the issue by releasing second generation versions of both their cards, which are both setting the pace in the 3D sector. Voodoo-based cards (3Dfx) currently use a pass-through cable to connect to your existing graphics card, and when the 3D stuff kicks in, it completely takes over the monitor. This means no 3D in a window, which might not bother most gamers, but would be nice for 3D rendering applications, as well as

things like *Quake* level editors.

The new Voodoo Rush-based cards feature both 2D, normal graphics card functions, and 3D acceleration on the same card. This means that you don't need a separate graphics card, and there's no pass-through cable, so you get 3D in a window. The first card on the market using this chipset will be the Hercules Stingray 128/3D which should be available by the time you read this. This card uses a total of 6Mb of EDO RAM, 4Mb for display memory and another 2Mb for holding textures. The

The Voodoo Rush represents the first 3Dfx one-stop solution.



ThrustMaster triumph

THRUSTMASTER ARE RENOWNED FOR THEIR rather excellent range of joysticks but, unfortunately, this kind of quality usually comes at a very high price. This is about to change with the release of the superb Top Gun flightstick which is built to the very high standards ThrustMaster have become famous for – but at a cost of just £34.99. We've tested this stick with several flight sims, and while it doesn't quite match the performance of the sticks at the top of the ThrustMaster range, it certainly holds its own against its immediate competitors and represents great value for money. For more info contact ThrustMaster on 0118 978 7087.





card will run all games designed for existing Voodoo-based cards such as the Orchid Righteous 3D and Diamond Monster 3D, and it comes with the excellent *Formula 1*, BMG's platformer *Pandemonium* and, allegedly, *Shadows Of The Empire*, the Nintendo 64 *Star Wars* title.

VideoLogic's PowerVR card, the Apocalypse 3D, has been given a facelift as well. The new card, the Apocalypse 3Dx, is faster than the previous version, and now uses bi-linear filtering. This may sound needlessly techie, but all it means is that close-up blockiness is smoothed out, which most people reckon looks better. To get you started, The Apocalypse 3Dx comes with four games: *Resident Evil*, *Ultimate Race*, *MechWarrior 2*



and an enhanced version of *Wipeout 2097*.

While some games will be specially written for each card, most 3D games look likely to be

Direct3D titles.

Since both cards have Direct3D drivers, these games should run on either card. As to which is the fastest, preliminary Direct3D tests give the Voodoo cards the edge on slower PCs, while the Apocalypse does

better on fast (200MHz)

machines. These results should be treated with caution, however, as they're by no means a measure of actual game performance. But however the figures turn out, both cards have great potential, so let's all hope that some games start arriving so we can test them properly.

Dave Mathieson

Product details

Card: Apocalypse 3Dx

Price: £187

Manufacturer: VideoLogic

Contact: 01923 260511

Card: Hercules Stingray 128/3D

Price: £222

Manufacturer: Imago

Contact: 01635 861122



F1 from Psygnosis is still the best-looking 3Dfx game out there. It's incredible that the Voodoo Rush has arrived long before the games we were waiting for.

DirectX 5 imminent

MICROSOFT'S EFFORTS TO STAMP THEIR AUTHORITY on the games industry are about to step up a gear with the release of DirectX 5, which will have advanced hardware capabilities such as 3D sound acceleration, MMX optimisations, support for AGP (the next version of Intel's MMX chip) and rendering features such as anti-aliasing, texture filtering and range-based fog. This is good news for the games development community who are finally beginning to come to terms with the obvious advantages of using DirectX under Windows 95. We'll bring you more news as we get it.

ThrustMaster trauma

NO ONE CAN ARGUE WITH THE quality and performance of the ThrustMaster range of flightsticks, but configuring the things can be an absolute nightmare. Enter Sim-Tech with their CS Commander software, a very handy little utility which allows you to configure your flightstick quickly and easily through Windows 95. The Commander retails at £24.95 and you can get your hands on a copy from Sim-Tech on 01628 662424.





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ZONE On-Line

The awful truth

Outlaws on-line, Twilight Lands – the multi-player games we tested out this month all lead to the same conclusion... Still, there's always the *PC Zone* Website there to see us through this dark patch.

THIS MONTH, WE FINALLY HAD TO FACE AN AWFUL truth. It was pulled, kicking and thrashing into the harsh light of rectitude. We were reluctant, almost tearful in our admittance. But ultimately, we had to conclude that most multi-player games are not very good.

It doesn't seem like a particularly perceptive observation, but listen for one second, dammit. It seems that the element which makes a single-player game into an orgasmic multi-player experience is 'magic'. On paper, many titles have sounded like they could slap *Quake* to the floor, unconscious. On screen, many great single-players have been screaming out for a network option. But when they're stuck on the Internet, pinned to a Website, or thrown around a LAN, you find that they're not that great. Worse still, they suck.

Take two examples: *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* and *Carmageddon*. Surely two of the most eagerly anticipated multi-player games in the history of the Christian faith.

X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter is fantastic on paper (and on celluloid), good in single-player, and yes, exciting and great fun in network mode. Until you try to do anything too complicated, such as co-op missions or campaigns. Then it falls down. Also, by today's standards, its four-player Internet option is a bit of a joke.

Carmageddon, oh lovely *Carmageddon*. We played it networked in the office this week. Our conclusion: hmmmmmm. It's packed with all sorts of gimmicky multi-player games (Tag, Capture The Flag etc), but the one thing you want to do – a three-lap race with seven of your chums – is impossible. You can't do it.

So, fellow network gamers, it's sad and upsetting to admit. Despite paper, investment, two years in development, and a single-player game you could use as a sex toy, most multi-player games still disappoint.

David McCandless



OUTLAWS

Who better to investigate the on-line capabilities of LucasArts' homage to the Spaghetti Western, *Outlaws*, than our very own Charlie Brooker? We can only think of about a hundred other names.



Remember those hot summer afternoon games of Cowboys and Indians that half the population of your school used to get caught up in, where no one wanted to play as 'the Indians' and everybody used to cheat and pretend they hadn't already been 'killed'? No? Nor do I. I must be getting old. Still, chances are you do remember that old episode of *The Goodies* in which Graeme, Bill and Tim fell out over

ownership of a cream-filled scone mine (hey, it was zany humour, okay?) and settled their differences with a Western-style shoot-out, using ketchup dispensers in place of nasty bang-bang sticks. Well, that was as close as you could get to interacting in a genuine gunfight in the late '70s, when everything was a bit crap and lo-fi. Now it's the '90s and we've got paintball, laser tag, and on-line games of LucasArts' *Outlaws*.

While it's never going to be a patch on *Quake*, *Outlaws* makes for a more realistic shooting



(Top) A great big Gatling gun to pick off those damn Yankees. (Middle) What in tarnation's goin' on here?! Two down, and caught in the middle of a re-load? It's certain to be curtains this time boy... (Bottom) We've got those bloody Germans on the run! Tar and feathers at the ready lads...



(Above left) Get down to basics with a good old-fashioned knife fight – if you're capable of getting a clean shot in, that is. Lag problems, which create inconsistent and choppy movement, sometimes makes this delicate operation rather difficult as characters tend to leap about all over the place. (Above right) Smoking is good for you after all...



spree. The gameplay emphasises the importance of sneakily stalking your opponent, using bits of your environment as cover, conserving ammunition, and of course, keeping a steady aim, whereas *Quake* (and indeed, *Duke*) are breakneck exercises in gung-ho killery, in which he who runs screaming at his opponents often comes out on top. Hiding is essential, since it doesn't take much to get killed in *Outlaws*, either (one or two shots from even the humblest pistol and you're coffin-bound), and since each weapon needs to be manually reloaded throughout, it's very easy to be caught with your pants down.

It'll be alright on the gunfight

If you've got a copy of the game (and it'll have to be the full commercial release, since the multi-player facility is disabled in the one-level demo), try sailing your browser towards <http://www.rebelhq.com>, LucasArts' new on-line gaming site. Despite an understandably heavy bias toward *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*, you'll find information and links relating to *Outlaws* – including a link to <http://www.zone.com> (no relation to our good selves), Microsoft's recently revamped 'interactive gaming site'. Here you can play *Outlaws* on-line, against other human beings, for free.

Before you can get truly stuck in, it's necessary to download a pair of whopping great plug-ins for Internet Explorer (yes, Internet Explorer – well, it is a Microsoft site after all), which needs about 4Mb in total. You'll only have to do it the once, so it's worth the tooth-grinding, buttock-shifting wait. Play with a yo-yo or something while you're waiting. If you're a twat.

Anyway, once your plug-ins have been well and truly plugged (a seamless exercise, thanks to the big M's on-the-fly installation system), the only remaining chore is to assign yourself a user name (sadly the name 'Clint' has already been taken, and doubtless 'John_Wayne', 'Django', and 'Lee_Van_Cleef' have too), think up an easy-to-remember password, fill out an on-line form which expects you to spill the beans about your address, age, e-mail address and income, and finally log on.

High-tech noon

Once 'in the zone' you'll find yourself in the *Outlaws* lobby, where you can chat to other players, trade insults, and generally try to sound cool (although by virtue of what you're actually doing, you're clearly not) before leaping headlong into an on-line game. Up to 50 separate games can be running at

once, and joining or hosting a match is simplicity itself. To host a game on your machine, simply click on an available (empty) game 'slot', click on 'host', and then plead with other players to come and join in. If you want to pile in to another player's game, simply click on an occupied slot and wait (the number of players joining in is represented by pairs of crossed pistols).

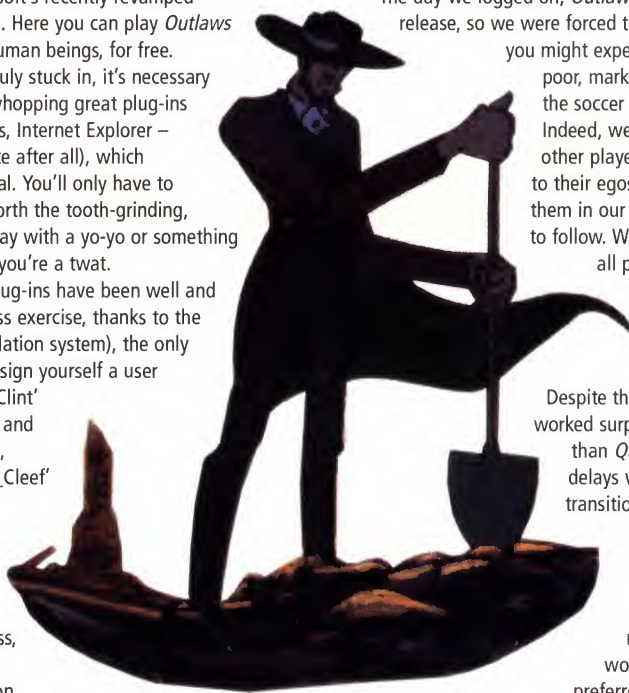
A major drawback with every on-line game is the infuriating stop-and-start choppiness caused by excessive latency (or 'lag') 'twixt opposing players: if Umlaut from Latvia joins the game, with his 9600 baud modem, coal-powered 386, and poorly-maintained national telephone system based on the old 'two tin cans and a piece of string' principle, it slows everybody down. Thankfully, it's easy to spot these slowpokes on the *Outlaws* site – each player's relative latency is represented by a simple 'traffic light' system (green is good, red is bum bum ploppy poo), and you're free to eject any red-lighters from your game before starting up.

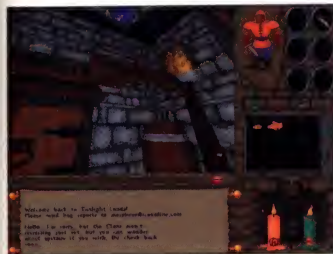
You old lag, you

The day we logged on, *Outlaws* was still awaiting a UK release, so we were forced to play against Americans. As you might expect, our lag time was pretty poor, marking us down as 'last pick for the soccer team' to all the other players. Indeed, we were eventually forced to beg other players to let us join in by pandering to their egos and promising to mention them in our account of the on-line gun-fest to follow. We won't, though, because they all played like bastards, shooting us in the back of the head at the earliest available opportunity, time after time.

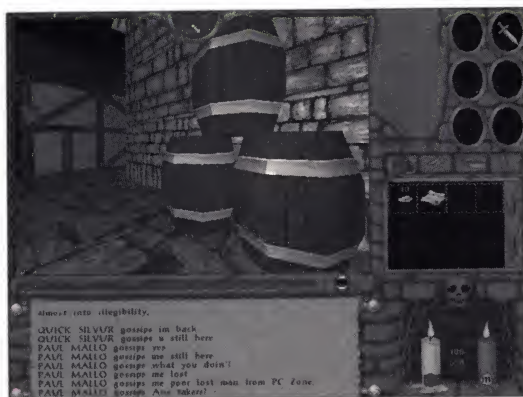
Despite the lag problems, the game worked surprisingly well. It's slower-paced than *Quake* by nature, so the delays weren't too intrusive, and the transition from browser to game was fairly seamless (provided you remember – doh! – to put the game CD in your drive first). Indeed, post-game banter revealed that many of the would-be gunslingers actively preferred *Outlaws* over *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*, which suffers noticeably from

lag problems. If you stick to a maximum of four players per game, only play ball with 'green lighters', and possess an admirably steely nerve, *Outlaws* makes for an agreeably violent on-line diversion. Well, it beats the Official Wisconsin Donkey and Mule Homepage, at any rate. **Z**

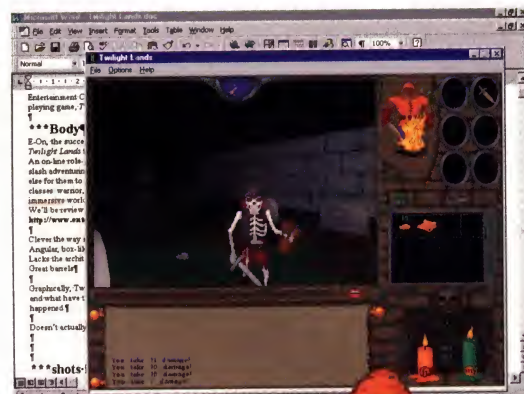




Twilight Lands often doesn't tell you when you're dead, so you end up wondering what the hell happened and why the hell you're rooted to the spot.



(Above left) Although *Twilight Lands* lacks the architectural complexity and grace of *Quake*, it must be said that it does indeed have some of the best barrels I've ever seen in a game of this type. (Above right) Here's me – playing the game and writing my review at the same time. The lag isn't bad, but on-screen characters do jump around the screen if you're playing using a minimum spec 14000bps modem.



Twilight Lands

Paul Mallinson goes looking for life after *Meridian 59* with

E-On's new on-line role-playing game, *Twilight Lands*.



In the April issue of *PC Zone* we ran a small article in our news section of the magazine announcing the arrival of *Ultima Underworld On-Line* from Origin. "What a great idea!", "Can't wait to play it!", "Why didn't they do this before?" ran the messages sent to us. Loads of people fell for it, but it was little more than a cruel and heartless hoax on our part. It was the April issue after all, and we couldn't resist it.

The idea of taking this hit RPG, mucking around with the code and re-releasing it as a multi-player on-line game with unlimited interaction is a sound one. *Ultima Underworld* may be four years old, but it still rocks, and the graphics still cut the mustard – so why not do it? Someone ought to.

Make do

Will it happen, though? Or will we have to put up with the likes of *Twilight Lands* until this dream is realised? I fear we must. *Twilight Lands* represents a giant leap backwards, especially in terms of presentation, from the mighty *Ultima Underworld*. Graphically, *Twilight Lands* and *Meridian 59* have had four years to catch up on *Ultima Underworld*, and what have they collectively managed? Zilch. It's like DirectX never happened.

Sporting some of the worst graphics ever seen in a game of this type, *Twilight Lands'* angular, box-like architecture is ugly and slow-moving. The surroundings are dire and the character graphics aren't much better. In short, the whole thing looks crap. The clever display-swapping (low-res when moving, hi-res when still) is scant compensation.

Forget the graphics

So *Twilight Lands* looks dire, but surely there must be more on offer under its leprous surface – it is an on-line game after all, allowing goblin fans (like myself) to meet and converse freely.

Viewed from the first-person, *Twilight Lands* has all the basic elements of an RPG (stats, weapons, spells, etc), with type-in facilities for on-screen chat and simple quests to act out and complete.

The game begins in a medieval town, where many of the game's player characters hang out. Except there aren't that many at the moment (which'll no doubt change when word spreads), so the first thing to do will be to explore the rat-ridden dungeons and skeleton-infested graveyard for goodies. Killing monsters earns experience points, and acquiring cash buys better equipment. Get killed on a crusade and your character will be returned to the safety of the town church, a few items and experience points lighter. It's all formula stuff which works reasonably well, even if it is a little on the dull side of average.

More to come

Having said that, development of *Twilight Lands* doesn't stop with what we see here. Who's to say that the graphics won't improve, or that the gameplay will never be more than bare bones hack 'n' slash? E-On are working on updates as we speak, which will be implemented as the project progresses.

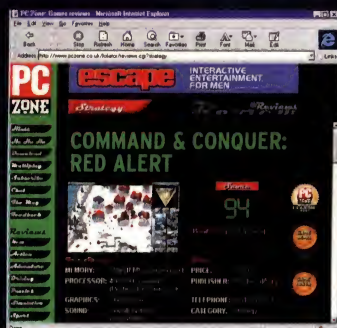
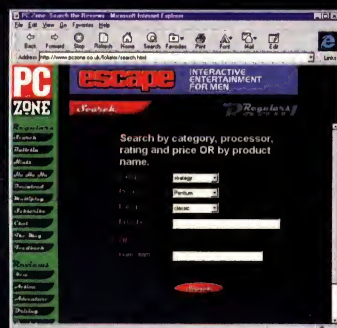
If anything, *Twilight Lands* is a reasonable grounding for the Leicester-based company, and if the developers pull their finger out to spice things up a bit (sorting out those graphics, adding some interesting non-player characters, some atmosphere, and a few decent quests for instance) it could go on to be something quite special. As it stands, they've got a lot of work to do before it comes anywhere near this target.

For more information about *Twilight Lands* check <http://www.e-on.co.uk>.

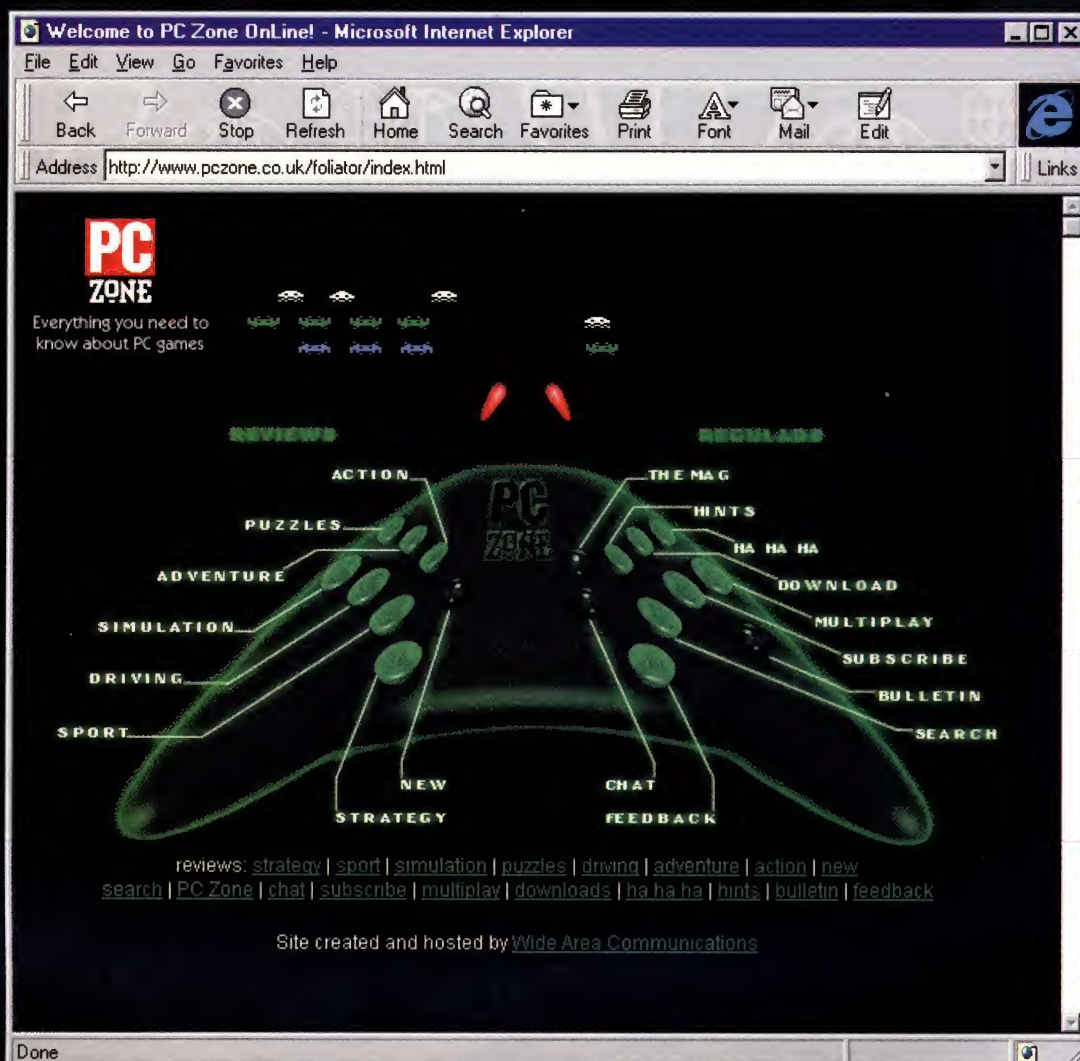


PC ZONE

Website



(Top) Search it out! Let's look for all strategy games with a 'Classic' rating. (Above) Hooray for PC Zone on-line!



Fire up your browsers, folks, the **PC Zone Website** is here. Crammed with reviews, downloads, hot industry news, chat forums and instalments of *Cybertwats*, it's every reader's wet dream come true. **Jamie Cunningham** dons clean underpants and makes a cheap rate appointment with <http://www.pczone.co.uk>

IF YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE NERDY NET-HEADS WHO LIKES TO hang ten on the superhighway, you'll know that all Websites fall into one of just three categories: porn, shit, and boring. The first is a cunning trick to make you part with your credit card number in exchange for a badly scanned photo from a '70s stroke mag, and the other two, well, they speak for themselves. Disappointment, displeasure and distress reign supreme. But fear not, here's your chance to get acquainted with a new category: spoooge-tastic. Which is precisely where the world-shakingly glorious *PC Zone* site fits in. (Quelle surprise – Ed)

The regular sections

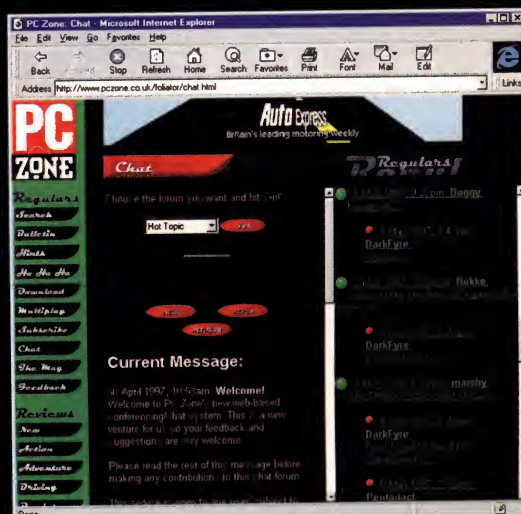
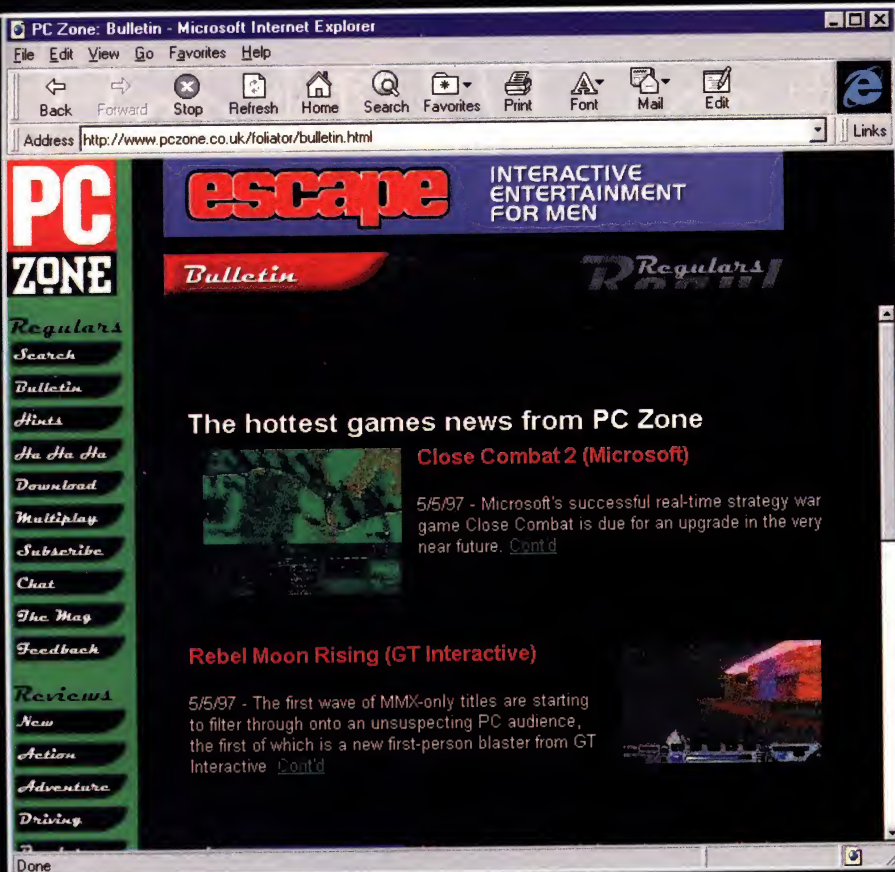
The main opening screen, a monster joypad with lots of inviting buttons, allows you to explore the site, and even plays *Space Invaders* with itself while waiting for you to make up your mind.

First off we'll deal with the right-hand side of the joypad:

- **The Mag:** Take a look-see at the latest issue of *Zone*, and find out just how dire it is before you waste a fiver on it.
- **Hints:** Tips, tricks and similar sneaky-cheaty type things.
- **Ha Ha Ha:** Praise be to Allah for Charlie Brooker's deranged sense of humour.
- **Download:** The file area, where you can grab demos and utilities to turn your PC into a software metropolis and be the envy of all your sad friends.
- **Multi-play:** A top games server on the way!
- **Subscribe:** Join the fashionable fraternity of *PC Zone* subs.
- **Bulletin:** All the latest game industry tidings of joy.
- **Search:** Rummage around the sumptuous reviews database.
- **Chat:** Take part in any of the on-line forums.
- **Feedback:** A rogue's gallery of *PC Zone* bods, complete with their e-mail addresses.

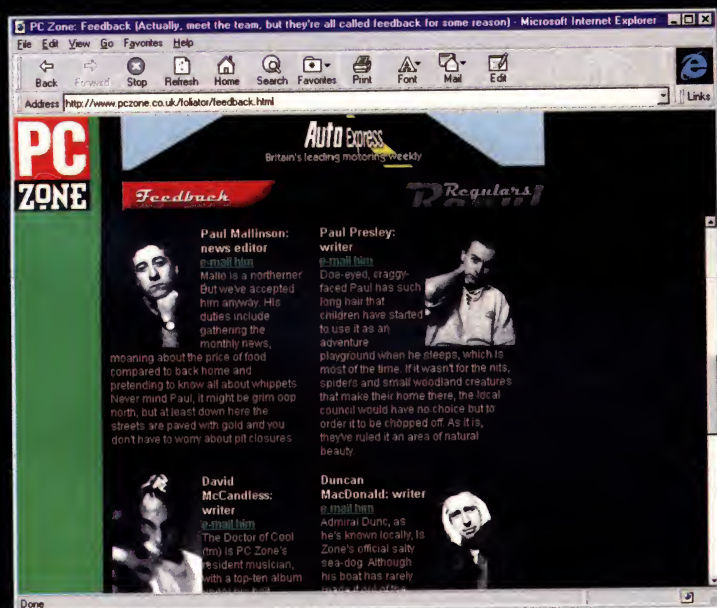
Chat and be merry

Why not come along and participate in one of the chat forums? You can make intelligent comments, or have a Barney. It's fun, and you won't end up with physical injuries.

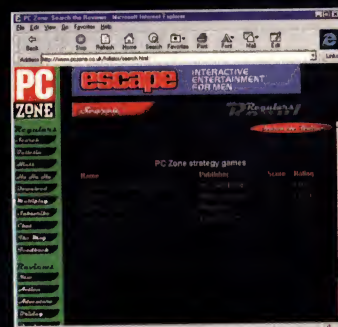


(Above) Converse with like-minded individuals (which includes the Zone boys) in the PC Zone chat forums.

(Left) Keep abreast of all the latest goings-on in the games industry here in the Bulletin area – updated daily!



(Left) Print this page out 20 times and use it when your bog roll runs out.



(Above) Demos! Hum, Red Alert looks brill. Let's check it out...

If, for example, you think that *Carnageddon* is a pile of poo, visit the PC Zone forum and fire away. Or if you want to add your opinion to the Hot Topic, stop by at the forum of the same name and say your piece (come up with something vaguely rational and you could well find yourself in print). Maybe you want to smear the editor in peanut butter? Fine. Create a new message in the 'Chat' forum, type away, and hey presto, it's there for all and sundry to boggle at. You never know, he might take you up on the offer.

The review categories

Select any of the buttons on the left-hand side of the joypad to trigger an automatic search that will trawl the site's on-line database looking for reviews that match your choice. So if you click 'strategy', you'll see an invitingly long list of

strategy games to choose from. Pick one of these, and you'll be furnished with a full review of the game in question, complete with its score, technical specifications, the date it was launched, the price, and even the publisher's name and telephone number in the event of it trashing your machine. If there's a demo available, you can download it. If there are hints and tips you can jump directly to them. Dead nifty, eh?

Say goodbye to piles

If your house looks anything like mine, chances are you'll have stacks of copies of old PC Zones piled randomly about the place. Four in the lounge doing a drinks mat impression. Two on the floor in the lavvy gathering grime. One curled up on the kitchen window sill with a wasp detonation on the back cover. Not any more! The site's magnificent search engine means that instead of burgling your own bedroom for back issue reviews, you'll be able to find them just by opening up a Web Browser. And you can read them on-line. You can even go back and narrow your search – so you could, for instance, look for all arcade games that were rated as 'Pants'. Untold amounts of fun.

The all-important conclusion

Unless your head whistles in a cross wind, you'll love <http://www.pczone.co.uk> to bits. It's constantly updated, and it's steadfastly spoooge-tastic. Go see. ②

On-Line News & Gossip

The page with its finger on the pulse of on-line gaming

Fantasy net-ball



WE'VE ALL PLAYED CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 and *Actua Soccer*. They're fun, right? But what if they were combined and then stuck on-line as one big juicy modem-based experience. Sounds like it could be cool – which is exactly the opinion of interactive developers Crush! and the megabucks

Sun Corporation of Japan. They're describing it (rather hyperbolically) as "The most realistic and advanced soccer game that has ever been produced." The idea of the hitherto nameless title is to take on the role of manager or player/manager, build a stadium, a team, and then go head-to-head in a league system against "tens of thousands of people".

Quite where these squillion participants will come from isn't clear. Nor is the quality of the real-time football game. But fair play to Sunsoft. This is the first on-line football game we've come across. And it sounds so fantastically ambitious, it might just work. Details: www.crush.co.uk.



Quake it all about

IF YOU RECKON YOURSELF AS A QUAKE NINJA, THEN maybe you'd like to attend the UK Clan Meet at London games café, Shoot 'n' Surf, on Saturday 5 July 1997.

Apparently some major *Quake* personalities will be gracing the occasion including er, Sujoy, LordStorm, QuickSilver, and – who knows? – the UberFragGruppen-Meister may even deign to make an appearance. Punch in www.uther.demon.co.uk/clanmeet/clanmeet.html for details, or www.avnet.co.uk/dominic for a report on the last Clan Meet.

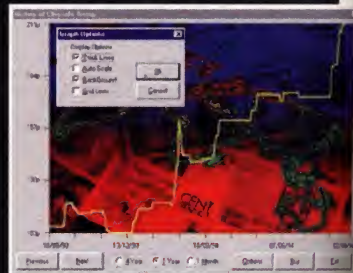


Are you a Pod-god?

UBI SOFT HAVE CURRENTLY GOT a racing challenge going down at their Website (www.ubisoft.co.uk) based around their rather skill racing game, *Pod*. Apparently there's some UberPodGod who's done a three-lap race in 2:05 minutes. You download his ghost from the site and then try to beat his sorry ass. Fastest time, after 31 August 1997, will win a Bronze MMX PC. There are a bunch of other prizes as well. Do it (for us, yeah?).

Fantasy Tory-Boy™

IN AN INTERESTING TWIST ON THE FANTASY-THIS AND fantasy-that industry, Team17 and the news agency Reuters have combined to create – yes! – Fantasy StockMarket... or *Profits Warning*, as they're calling it. Starting on 30 June 1997, players are given £100,000 'virtual cash' with which to invest in 250 companies on the London Stock Exchange.



Share prices are updated every 15 minutes, and after a trading week, the player with the best performing portfolio wins er, £10,000 cash (with a smattering of lower cash hand-outs for lesser achievers). We think it's an interesting concept which may be fun. But since it costs £15 to play, you may think otherwise. Jam www.team17.com/pw into your browser and see.



Calling all sailor boys

IF, SINCE YOUR CHILDHOOD, YOU'VE FANTASISED ABOUT sailing the high-seas and torsos soaked in rum, then it's time to switch magazines. Alternatively, you could try out *Iron Wolves*, hailed as a "unique 3D Internet Naval simulator". Sadly, it doesn't recreate the daily interaction of happy-go-lucky sailors, but instead throws you into a tense real-time world of sea warfare, placing you at the helm of a variety of battleships and submarines. It costs £6 a month to play, so it better be good. We haven't checked it out yet, but you can at www.on-line.co.uk.

Terris gets colourful

AOL'S NAUSEATINGLY POPULAR ON-LINE TEXT adventure, *Terris*, has been given a much-needed 'update' to its front end. If you're one of the 60 quadzillion people who prefer leather armour to denim and the one God gave you, then you'd probably like to download the new 'Wizard'. It adds – woo! – colour to the black-and-white text game, plus sound effects, music, separate windows, and the continual updating of items, gold and skill. "Warmth and depth" are apparently the end result of these enhancements. "Sadness and spots" is the more likely outcome, we reckon.

On AOL: GO TERRIS

See LARA CROFT like
you've never seen her before
Woow!
... and other great games too!
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but try to keep a
grip on reality!

CREATIVE

3D Blaster

PCI



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3D Blaster PCI's compatibility also gives no other card a look in, with extensive games support including Direct3D™, DirectDraw™, CGL and Speedy 3D.

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the 3D Blaster PCI, and four of these hot titles come in the box – Quake™ shareware, Flight Unlimited™, Battle Arena Toshinden™, and Rebel Moon™. Keep your eyes open for more to come.

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CREATIVE
CREATIVE LABS

GEEK PO

**WHEN IS A SPOD NOT A SPOD?
WHEN HE'S AS NORMAL AS YOU OR I.
CONFUSED? YOU PROBABLY STILL WILL
BE, EVEN IF YOU MAKE IT ALL THE
WAY THROUGH THIS BIT OF
LIGHTWEIGHT FLUFF BY
CHARLIE BROOKER.**

HOW'S IT GOING, NERDBOY? I'M TALKING TO YOU, JERKY. YEAH, YOU. You're a geek, you are. A bona fide dweeb. It's true; you see, the mere fact that you're reading these words in the first instance proves you're so fascinated by the world of PC games that you'll go out and spend money on magazines devoted to writing about them. You live at home with your mother, you've never had sex (except with your own hand), you have the dress sense of a senile old man and the odour of a decaying corpse. A stomach-churning galaxy of pus-capped pimples is marching steadily across your bumfluff-sprouting face like a yellow-speckled acne army. You spend every spare moment playing arcane D&D style sword-slinging fantasy games, role-playing a broad-shouldered warrior with an eye for the ladies in a pathetic attempt to escape the miserable reality of your downtrodden, grey-shaded, within-these-walls existence. The few friends you do have are limited to those you discover on Internet chat channels, and since they're all as withdrawn and repressed as you, conversation is limited to crashingly dull tech-wanking over UNIX, Quake stats and polygon counts, interrupted only by wild theorising about Gillian Anderson's bedroom habits (hint: she will never, ever sleep with a loser like you), and occasional outbreaks of petty, pathetic 'my computer's better than yours' chest-beating. You're a spod, a geekoid, a pointdexter, a dork. You're sad.

Or are you?

HOWDY, SPODBOY

Well, maybe not. But it's fair to say that the general public tend to place computer game fanatics into one of two camps: brainless persistent teenage offenders (fave raves: PlayStation games and hanging around in arcades) or awkward, shambling, socially inept losers (fave raves: long-winded RPGs and the Internet). The general assumption seems to be that anyone who displays an interest in computers or games is doing so to fill a gaping chasm in their lives, and that they devote far more time to their hobby than is strictly healthy. There's something shameful, they feel, about spending more time with your computer than with other human beings – even if you live in Rochester, where the pavements have more joie de vivre than the population.

So is the general consensus correct? Of course not: it's mere prejudice. And like most prejudicial assumptions, it's based on widespread ignorance. Which is why, in a valiant attempt to combat this frustrating national naivety, I spent a wet Saturday afternoon in May (just my luck: the only wet Saturday afternoon this May) leaping out at unsuspecting PC game customers and asking them a few pertinent questions. I wanted to find out what they thought about geeks. I wanted to know how geeky they were themselves. And most important of all, I wanted to make them look a bit stupid in print. Apart from customers, I also chatted to a couple of people from the other side of the counter – if anyone should know who or what a geek actually is, it's them.

OUR SURVEY SAID...

The results didn't really surprise me. I'd gone looking for a 'traditional' computer nerd, the type of person described in the opening paragraph. If the general consensus was correct, the gaming stores should be bursting

NAME: MIKE THOMPSON AGE: 31



ENCOUNTERED: Mike is the assistant manager of the Rathbone Place branch of Computer Exchange.
APPEARANCE: Semi-shaved cartoon gorilla who's just stolen a baseball cap from the head of a small child and is trying to pass himself off as a human being.
WHAT KIND OF CUSTOMERS TEND TO BE THE GEEKIEST? Apart from young kids playing PlayStation games, definitely PC RPG people. They're complete geeks who like to play games which normally last for weeks but that they finish in days, because they're so bloody sad and they haven't got a life.
ARE THEY EASY TO SPOT? A mile off. They're usually half bald, with really long hair – which has never been washed. They haven't got a clue about dressing, and the clothes they wear aren't very clean. They've always got glasses – always. Sometimes two pairs just in case one breaks. And they seem to have loads of bloody money.
WHERE DO THEY GET THE MONEY FROM? Their mum, probably.
HOW OLD ARE THEY, ON AVERAGE? Ooh, usually between 25 and 35.
DO YOU FEEL SORRY FOR THEM? No, I absolutely detest them. As customers, they're normally very polite, lovely customers. But I tend to think 'what are they going to do when they get home?' I can see it all in my mind's eye: they're sitting there with one hand on the mouse and the other on their erect penis – what little of it there is.

COMMENTS: Mike said some other things about geeks that we simply can't reproduce here, peppered with the sort of colourful language which can only be learned through a lifetime spent in pubs, working men's clubs, barrack rooms and Australia. Definitely not a geek, then.

VICE



NAME: IDRIS GANI AGE: 23



ENCOUNTERED: Inspecting the shelves

at Computer Exchange, Rathbone Place, with a friend.

APPEARANCE: Not as forbidding as he appears in the Polaroid. Trendy Carhartt jacket, very nice trousers. Clean.

ARE YOU A GEEK? Most PC owners and PC gamers are geeks, but me myself - I'm not.

WHAT DEFINES A GEEK ANYWAY - AND HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE THAT YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THEM? A geek is somebody who doesn't seem to come off their computer, and stays on the dole. I've got a job, so I'm not a geek. And I've been out with girls as well.

EVER BEEN IN A FIGHT? I've been in arguments, fights, yeah. It happens. Especially if I've been behind the wheel of a car. I turn into a bit of a beast. I mean, I don't like fighting, but when it comes along I'll pull the bat out of the boot and... you know.

YOU BEAT PEOPLE WITH BATS? Well, I've never beaten anybody with a bat, but I've swung a few in my time, you know what I mean?

ER, SO, ARE YOU BUYING A GAME TODAY, THEN? Naah, I'm exchanging this one. I bought it a week ago and it's absolute rubbish.

BUT THAT'S TOMB RAIDER! SEE THAT 'PC ZONE CLASSIC' ROSETTE ON THE BOX? THAT WAS MY DOING. Actually, I noticed that after I played it, and I thought 'they should give him the sack.'

THANKS, IDRIS. THANKS A SODDING BUNCH.

OUR VIEW IS: NO GEEKS

Not only is Idris liable to dish out frenzied bat-swinging beatings to anyone who cuts him up, he also wears trendy clothes and hails from East Ham. Doesn't fit our accepted geek profile at all. Damn. And we'd have loved to fit him up because of his comments on Tomb Raider.

ENCOUNTERED: Trying to blend into the background as I pounced on him.

APPEARANCE: Casual leisure gear. Clean hair.

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A GEEK? Er, no.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE GEEK, ANYWAY? I don't know. It's... er... (pained expression)... er... Well, I wouldn't like to be one, that's all.

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT IF YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT 'ONE' IS? I MEAN, YOU MUST HAVE ENCOUNTERED SOME AT SOME POINT IN YOUR LIFETIME? No, I don't think so. Well, I don't know, I probably have, but... look, this isn't going very well.

YOU'RE DUCKING THE ISSUE, AREN'T YOU? IF YOU DON'T CONSIDER YOURSELF A GEEK, WHY NOT? Um... I don't know. (obviously irritated) What would you say a geek is?

NO, NO, I'M ASKING YOU THE QUESTIONS. Oh. Right. Well I don't know, okay? That's it, okay?

BUT YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT ONE? Well, I might be then.

YOU MIGHT BE? Yes.

I'M BEGINNING TO TALK YOU ROUND? Yes.

NOW IT DOESN'T SOUND SO BAD, SO YOU'RE WILLING TO ADMIT IT? Yes.

THANKS. CAN I TAKE YOUR PHOTO? JUST SAY 'YES' OR 'NO'. Er...

YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY 'YES'. Oh... alright.

IS THAT A 'YES' OR A 'NO'? (Clearly pissed off) Yes.

OUR VIEW IS: NO GEEKS

Chris really didn't want to be drawn on the subject at all - perhaps he has something to hide. Further questioning revealed that he was shopping for a copy of Diablo because several friends had recommended it to him. Tricky - buying an RPG is geeky, actually having friends is not. We'll have to sit on the fence on this one.

NAME: CHRIS MOORE AGE: 15



NAME: DAVID PALMER AGE: 31

ENCOUNTERED: Shopping with a playtester friend.
APPEARANCE: Denim jacket, white shirt. Lanky.
WOULD YOU SAY THAT THE PC IS SEEN AS THE GEEKIEST OF ALL THE GAMING PLATFORMS? Yes. Purely and simply because PC games don't always work straight away. You often have to fart around with them for quite a while.
DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A GEEK? No.
WHAT EXACTLY IS A GEEK, ANYWAY? Someone with glasses, silly cloth hat, spending days off playing computer games. They're a trainspotter. Or a bus-spotter.
MAINLY BASED ON APPEARANCE, THEN? Yeah, or they don't talk anything but games. They don't know anything about what life's like outside the door.
SO HOW COME YOU DON'T CONSIDER YOURSELF ONE, THEN? Because I go out most of the time, I only play PC games when I get a chance.



IN BETWEEN WILD CAROUSING SESSIONS? Something like that, yeah.
JUST WHAT IS IT ABOUT GAMING THAT David didn't strike me as being particularly geeklike, and I believed his 'busy social life' claims. But - and it's a big but - he was wearing a denim jacket with the name of the company he works for embroidered on the front - on a Saturday. This is the adult equivalent of wearing your school uniform during half-term - a simple yet unacceptable step into the realms of nerd-dom which gravely affects his overall geek rating.



ENCOUNTERED: Eyeballing Quake on a demonstration machine.
APPEARANCE: Cropped redhead Bjork clone coupled with square-jawed rugby captain type.
I NOTICED THE PAIR OF YOU GAMING AT QUAKE. DO YOU PLAY GAMES AT ALL? Paul: Not very often, no. They're a waste of time. You spend hours and hours working out how to do it and then when you've finished it - that's it. Shove it away until the next version comes along.
THEY LEAVE YOU FEELING HOLLOW INSIDE, DO THEY? Paul: Yeah, it's a bit pointless really.
BUT ISN'T LIFE ITSELF POINTLESS? Katy: It's all just a vacuum of time.
DO YOU USE COMPUTERS AT ALL? Both: Oh, yes.
WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELVES GEEKS OR NERDS? Paul: No way. Only people who play games on computers are nerds.
YOU DO REALISE THAT YOUR COMMENTS ARE GOING TO BE PRINTED IN A GAMES MAGAZINE, ACCOMPANIED BY YOUR NAME AND A PHOTOGRAPH OF YOUR FACE? OUR READERS PLAY GAMES. VIOLENT GAMES. Paul: So, am I going to be mugged by nerds in the street? (Laughs)
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A FIGHT? Paul: (Gravely) Yes. And you can put that in the magazine as well.
YOU'LL TAKE THEM ALL ON? Paul: Yeah. I'm a hardcore bastard.

JUST WHAT IS IT ABOUT GAMING THAT
 Paul and Katy are definite geek haters. Why don't they pick on someone their own size? Like Little and Large?



NAMES: PAUL ROBERTS AND KATY GEYVANPITRUS AGES: THEY DIDN'T SAY

NAMES: RICKY AND CANDY AGES: 22, 21



ENCOUNTERED: Browsing in the PC CD-ROM section of HMV Level One.
APPEARANCE: Young, fresh-faced couple. Nicely turned out, fashionable.
HAVE YOU COME HERE LOOKING FOR A SPECIFIC GAME? Well, we bought Theme Hospital yesterday, but mostly we like RPG games.
HMM. WOULD YOU SAY YOU'RE A GEEK? (Long pause) A kid? NO, A GEEK. What does that mean?
YOU KNOW - A NERD. A SPOT. (Blank expression) I don't...
SOMEONE WHO SPENDS ALL THEIR TIME PLAYING GAMES ON THEIR COMPUTER INSTEAD OF DEALING WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. ARE YOU ONE OF THEM? Oh, no. We play quite sensibly. And we use the computer for many other things as well - word processing, Internet, spreadsheets... many things.
DO YOU PLAY GAMES TOGETHER? We play together, yes. We've got so much hardware as well, to support our PC. We've got scanners, printers, digital cameras...

JUST WHAT IS IT ABOUT GAMING THAT
 Despite being a couple, despite wearing expensive clothes, despite being young, clear-skinned and pretty, in our opinion Ricky and Candy are geeks. The worrying predilection for RPGs, coupled with the ownership of uber-geeky digital cameras gives the game away. You can disguise yourself as much as you like, but there's no hiding from the Geek Police.

◀ at the seams with a veritable Lord Mayor's Show of unwashed dweebery.
 In reality I found only one 'conventional' geek - the type alluded to by both Mike Thompson and Rob Stokes (who have to serve them) - and a lot more 'closet' geeks - people who are clearly standing on the edge of nerd cliff, but vehemently refuse to admit it. The vast majority of the people I spoke to, however, were achingly normal, just like you or I. What a shocking conclusion.

A few things did surprise me, though. I was taken rather aback by the number of couples I encountered during my search; it seems that geeks occasionally come in pairs (although I was equally surprised to find not a single woman shopping for games on her own). And another interesting point: generally speaking, the geekier someone looked, the less likely they were to agree to be questioned and photographed. Perhaps they felt embarrassed by their hobby. Perhaps they thought I'd make them look stupid in print. Or perhaps they were just tossers. We'll never really know. The bastards. ⑦

NAME: DARREN DAVIS AGE: 22

ENCOUNTERED: Scanning shelves like an 'eagle-eyed' action man.
APPEARANCE: Bloody hard.
LOOKING FOR ANYTHING PARTICULAR TODAY? I'm just looking at the games, seeing what's new and out there.
WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A GEEK? No.



HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE A GEEK, ANYWAY? Someone who spends most of their time on the computer, most of their life.

SO YOU'RE NOT A GEEK THEN? No. I don't spend 24 hours a day on my PC. I have a social life.

EVER BEEN IN A FIGHT? Yes.

A NASTY FIGHT? Very nasty.

WHO WON? Well, I was stabbed and put in hospital. I was in a coma for a week, then in intensive care for another week. I was in hospital for over a month.

THAT ISN'T VERY GEEKY, IS IT? No.

THIS FIGHT - IT WASN'T OVER A GAME WAS IT? No, it was over a mountain bike and a car stereo system.

SAY NO MORE.

COMMENT: Anyone who participates in knife-fights is immediately disqualified from being considered remotely geeky. And besides, he'd probably deck us if we dared to print anything else.

NAME: ROB STOKES AGE: 31



ENCOUNTERED: Strolling down Tottenham Court Road, en route to his shop, Beyond Therapy, in Soho Square.

APPEARANCE: Rob's been a professional dancer in his time. Check-shirt suave.

YOU'VE GOT A PC AND YOU PLAY GAMES ON IT. REGULARLY? Not as often as I'd like to.

ARE YOU A BIT OF A SPOD? If I played more games, possibly.

WHAT DEFINES GEEKINESS FOR YOU, ANYWAY? Someone who plays games 24 hours a day.

OH COME ON. HAVE YOU EVER MET ANYONE LIKE THAT? Yeah - I know people who've played for 24 hour stints and been too tired to even focus, but carry on playing the same game.

CAN YOU SPOT THEM A MILE OFF? I can smell them a mile off.

BUT YOU RECKON YOU AREN'T A NERD. EVER BEEN IN A FIGHT?

When I was at school, yeah.

LOTS OF HAIR-PULLING, EH? BIT OF A GIRL'S FIGHT? Er...

yeah. I've been beaten up as well.

EVER BEATEN SOMEONE ELSE UP? I hurt someone slightly once. (Gravely) That wasn't very nice.

COMMENT: Rob admits to playing a lot of games, but then he does run a games shop so he's got an excuse. 'Hurting someone slightly' hardly counts as a proper fight, though, so his geek credentials still hang in the balance.

ENCOUNTERED: Stopping dead in his tracks, his jaw hanging slack in joyous amazement. The reason? He just caught sight of a 3DFx-enhanced version of Quake running on a 200MHz MMX Pentium PC.

APPEARANCE: Classic geek. Grubby, shockingly unfashionable anorak. Twitchy hands. Permanent grin. Needs a shampoo and cut. Thick glasses. Turbulent skin. A cross between a young Woody Allen and 'Pig pen' from the Peanuts comic strip.

HAVE YOU COME HERE TODAY TO BUY GAMES? No, just some RAM for my PC.

DO YOU PLAY GAMES AT ALL? Yes. A lot.

ARE YOU A COMPUTER GEEK? Yes.

YOU'RE PREPARED TO ADMIT THAT? Yes.

YOU'RE PREPARED TO STAND THERE AND SAY "I AM A COMPUTER GEEK"? Yes. "I am a computer geek." (gales of derisory laughter from nearby customers)

HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU'RE A GEEK? Because I play games every day.

OFTEN AT THE EXPENSE OF GOING OUTSIDE? Yes.

EVER BEEN IN A FIGHT? Yes. (Laughs)

DID YOU START IT? No. (Laughs again)

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME? I ended up getting beat up, but never mind.

DO YOU FANCY LARA CROFT OUT OF TOMB RAIDER? Yeah, she's alright.

YOU'RE A GEEK ALRIGHT. THE FIRST PERSON I'VE MET WHO'LL ADMIT TO BEING ONE. DO YOU THINK THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG WITH THAT? No. If you're a geek then you're a geek. And I'm a geek.

COMMENT:

Paul Ficinski is a geek. A nerd. A spod. He wears silly clothes. He's got thick glasses. He spends far, far too much of his time at home, tinkering with his PC. He's enamoured with computers and computer games to a frightening degree.

But lest ye mock him, consider this: Paul's got balls. He didn't shy away; he was the only person I encountered who actually admitted outright that he was indeed a spod. Who wasn't ashamed to say that he probably played with his computer too much. Who has endured physical beatings because of his appearance and interests, yet shrugs them off with a laugh. And who has courage enough to confess all of this to a complete stranger with a dictaphone. How many of you could do the same?

NAME: PAUL FICINSKI AGE: 15



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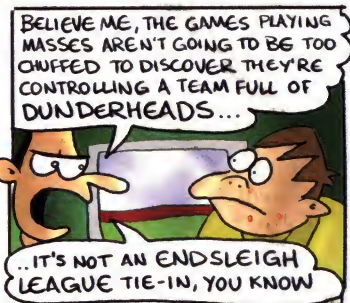
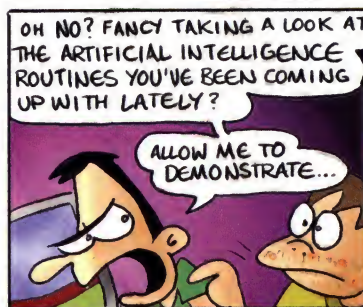
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Trying to succeed at Bullfrog's *Theme Hospital*, but just keep Thatcherizing things up? Don your masks for **Charlie Brooker's** two-page bluffer's guide, and things should remain safe in your hands...

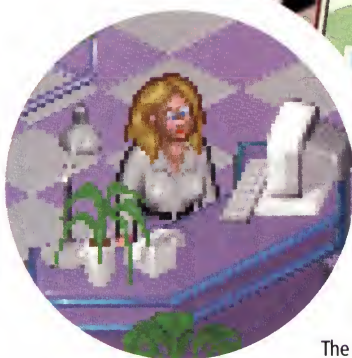


THEME HOSPITAL'S INTERFACE WORKS IN much the same way as a simple paint package – so always think like an artist and compose your work carefully from the offset. Getting the general layout of your hospital just right is crucial to success;

under pressure, it's all too easy to end up with a cluttered and confusing system of maze-like corridors, which pleases no one (except maybe Gyles Brandreth, who probably likes doing mazes – but you don't want people like *that* in your hospital anyway, unless they're being wheeled to the mortuary).

Bear in mind that some departments require more space than others (x-rays and operating theatres for example), whereas some can be crammed into relatively cramped surroundings, and still remain perfectly functional (such as the pharmacy).

Try to anticipate the sudden availability of new facilities (often made available mid-level) which you may need to incorporate into your hospital. Don't buy a new plot of land the minute you run out of space – instead, take a look at your hospital and try to decide whether any areas could be redesigned to make room for extra equipment.



(Left) This should be the first thing a new patient sees as they stagger into your hospital – a welcoming receptionist.

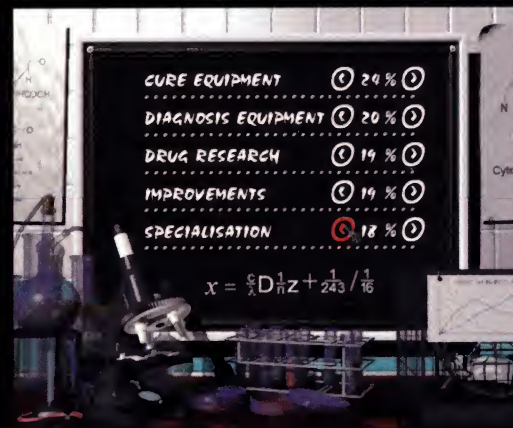


The positioning of different rooms is also important. Try to envisage your hospital as a kind of assembly line in which sick people enter through the main doors, and cured people leave through the back. The first thing your patients should see upon entering is a receptionist's desk, ideally next to a small row of seats in case there's a waiting list. The GP's offices should be nearby, with the diagnosis rooms further away, and the deranged curing machinery even further. Rooms that the general public rarely (if ever) enter, such as the research department and the staff room, can be safely hidden away at the back-end-of-beyond. Toilets, however, should be positioned well within pissing distance of the main areas.

Research

The public rarely get a look in here, so it makes sense to place the research rooms off the beaten track. You'll need a doctor with research qualifications to make use of this facility – and the more of them you place in the room, the faster they'll come up with the goods.

More equipment may be necessary as you increase the number of staff and each doctor will need an 'object' to use (be it a filing cabinet, autopsy machine, or computer) if he's going to be effective. Finally, don't forget to use the custom menu to alter the amount of attention paid to each different aspect of research as you see fit.



(Above) Don't forget to tweak the figures with your magic tweaking finger. Oo-er.

(Left) Make sure your researchers are actually doing some research (unless you're an MP, in which case they're probably too busy kneeling under your desk anyway).

Emergencies

Never underestimate the importance of an emergency. They're ideal opportunities to either prove your worth or break your back. Don't take one on unless you're certain your hospital can handle it. An average room should be able to cure six patients within the time limit, provided the existing queue isn't too heavy and it's quick and easy to reach from the helicopter pad (so make sure you know where that is). If necessary, build another room for emergencies – especially if it's a pharmacy which is used heavily by the rest of the patients anyway. Don't forget that clicking on the door of a relevant room brings up the queue manager which allows you to reorganise things so that emergency victims are treated first; simply drag them onto the door. It'll probably piss off everybody else in the queue, but hey – who gives a toss about them, anyway?



Staff

Your hospital needs to be designed as a business, but don't treat it like a fast food burger bar (I won't mention any specific companies by name, but I'm sure you can think of one) because in *Theme Hospital* anyone who hires dull-witted human plankton, pays them a pittance and forces them to work long hours simply won't achieve success. You pay peanuts, you get monkeys – and you never see Cheeta performing tracheotomies in those old *Tarzan* films, do you? Top-notch staff may seem costly to begin with, but they're undoubtedly a worthwhile investment. The performance of doctors and handy-men is particularly affected by their skill ratings, so if highly proficient ones become available, snap them up quickly before the computer players get their thieving virtual mitts on them.

As you progress through a level, the quality of available staff starts to dip, so it pays to go on a spending spree right at the beginning. In particular, be on your guard for surgeons (they're frustratingly rare), or psychiatrists (who are often easy to find as a level begins, but crop up less frequently as time passes).

Whenever possible, train your staff – a doctor trained in-house can be just as good as a bought-in specialist, with the added advantage of being cheaper to pay.

Finally, always try to keep the troops happy. Spacious, well-equipped staff rooms are handy for quelling the troublemakers (and they can be placed away from the main section of your hospital, as the diseased commoners don't need to use the room). If a member of staff is particularly shagged-out, force them to take a break before they go crazy and embark on a malpractice massacre. **Z**



(Above) It's worth paying a little over the odds for high quality staff. This bloke, for instance, is shit. So don't pay him a penny (unless you're down the docks and he's touting for business, you know).

(Right) If you want to cure dangerously deluded Elvis wannabes like this guy, you'll need a psychiatrist or two.

Rats

If the rodent rank and file rear their unwanted furry heads, take time out to go on a shooting spree. When you pass your cursor over them it becomes a crosshair – simply click to blast them into something resembling bolognese (albeit hairy, unpleasant bolognese). And if you shoot loads of the little critters, you not only gain money – you can also gain access to a secret rat level. According to Bullfrog, at any rate. And they wouldn't fib.



(Top) Look. An ugly bloke with a big head. Probably works for Tory central office.

(Above) Build loads of GP's offices as they're the most frequently used rooms in the entire game.

Training

It's very tempting to build a bloody great big lecture theatre, replete with medical skeletons, filing cabinets, overhead projectors and row upon row of uncomfortable, chewing-gum encrusted seating. Don't bother. Make like David Blunkett and try to cut those class sizes down to a manageable level. One or two students is ideal; any more and they get distracted and learn nuffink, innit? Eventually, the eager-eyed pupils will adopt the same skills and specialities as the consultant who taught them, at which point they should be replaced with a fresh bunch of vacuum-brained knuckleheads.



(Above) There's no need to put this many chairs in a lecture theatre. One or two will suffice. Mind you, no one's turned up anyway, judging by this picture. Lazy bloody students. Probably all back at the hall of residence rolling joints and reading the *NME*. Bastards.

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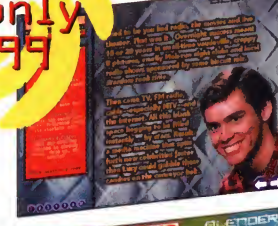
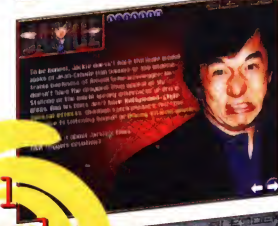
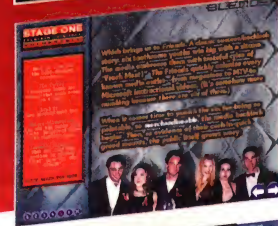
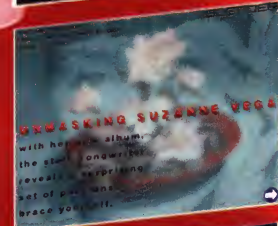
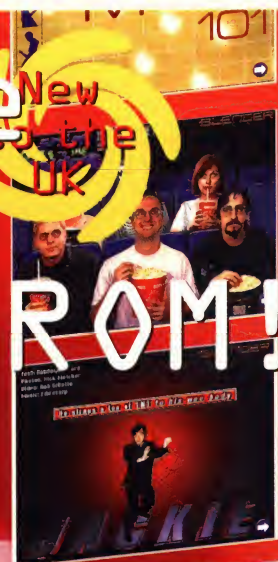
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Command & Conquer: Counterstrike Mission Guide

In the third of our, er, two part series **Warren Chrismas** guides you through the 16 missions of the *Red Alert* mission disc *Counterstrike*.



Allies

01 Sarin Gas 1: Crackdown

OBJECTIVE: Prevent cargo trucks from leaving and destroy enemy base

The key to success here is the mining of the roads to the north and west of your base, and the one just to the south-east. Do not attempt to block the roads with tanks - the cargo trucks are too fast. Make sure the mines are at least four or five deep and keep on replacing them. It's a good idea to build at least one extra mine layer. When you get involved with skirmishes against Soviet forces keep the fighting away from the mines or they'll explode.

You'll be told when all the trucks have been destroyed. Now move in on the enemy base with as many tanks as you can be bothered to build. Incidentally, the mission briefing suggests that you should infiltrate the enemy Radar Centre (which is in the north-east corner) to uncover the truck routes, but this really isn't necessary. Do use the spies to have a good snoop around though.

02 Sarin Gas 2: Down under

OBJECTIVE: Get troops to the east of the underground facility

To get through this 'indoor' mission you need to protect your spy very well and/or master the Scooby Doo method. That is, sneaking past flame towers and guards. At one stage you'll come to an area with two 'friendly' tesla coils. Activate the panel to the left and one of the coils disappears while the other destroys the on-rushing mammoth tank. There's a panel just below the guards in the room to the south. Sneak past the infantry to activate it, and the guards will be gassed.

Move south-east and you'll come to a room with another mammoth tank. Use your spy to activate the panel to the east and it will be destroyed by teslas, but watch out for the dog. The room to the south-west of this contains guarded captives. Move quickly and (some of) these can be saved. Saving Tanya in a nearby room will earn you brownie points.

The room to the south-east leads to the exit which is guarded by flame towers. Again, use your spy to activate the nearby switch. What do you mean you lost your spy ten minutes ago?

03 Sarin Gas 3: Controlled burn

OBJECTIVE: Infiltrate enemy power grid, capture Sarin processor plants and destroy enemy

Avoiding the patrolling mammoth tank, send a decoy to light the oil drums to the north-east of your start position. The enemy guarding the entrance to the base will disperse, giving you time to rush a troop-filled APC to the far east of the base. Unload, destroy a power plant, and reinforcements arrive.

If you're having problems with this mission you're probably building your base in the wrong place. DO NOT use the MCV at the point where it arrives - take it down to the flare to the south. Now build up your base, carefully watching for attacks via the ore field to the north and the enemy base to the west. You'll need plenty of turrets, pillboxes and air defences. Build up a force of tanks and rush the Soviet base to win through, but be careful not to destroy the processor plants - they need to be captured.



04 Fall of Greece: Personal War

OBJECTIVE: Escort Stavros to friendly outpost and then evacuate

Quick reactions needed here. Save frequently! Firstly, assign Tanya and Stavros to short cut keys. Head east as soon as possible with Tanya leading. Shoot barrels to take out rushing infantry. Keep Stavros to the left as you go around the corner, using Tanya to pick off the troops and dog.

Quickly continue north, bypassing the enemy by using the passage to the left. When you reach the town, immediately go across to the west and head downwards, again carefully picking off the infantry. Don't hang around in the town - you'll get nuked! Tanks arrive by sea. Crush the troops with these and engage combat with enemy tanks (for a few seconds at least) to create a decoy for Tanya and Stavros to

Read this!

COUNTERMEASURES

If you've worked your way through the game our French 'friends' like to call *Alerte Rouge*, there's no reason why you shouldn't be able to complete the majority of the missions in *Counterstrike* without much trouble. Nevertheless, between some extremely easy levels lie some downright tricky little bastards. This guide is designed for the intermediate player. We haven't got room to offer move-by-move solutions, but the advice given here will set you well on your way to finishing each of the missions.





05

◀ continue on their path. Watch for enemy in the trees.

Head west with the tanks, rushing through the enemy outpost as soon as possible, but shooting barrels as you go. The bridge to the north blows up but if you continue to the west you'll find a small crossing. Get the tanks across first, closely followed by Tanya and Stavros who you should move into the relative safety of the north-west corner of the base. Get Tanya to shoot the barrels first though, and then destroy the power plant to disable the tesla coil.

Reinforcements will have arrived to the north-east of the base. Move these through, destroying the flame towers as you go, to create a decoy while Stavros moves east then up and around to the helicopter. Enemy V2s can easily pick him off on the top ridge, so keep them all occupied to the south of the base.

05 Fall of Greece: Evacuation

OBJECTIVE: Evacuate at least one civilian from the four towns to the island

There's plenty of ore around so build a second (and maybe third) ore truck as soon as possible, but not at the expense of defending your base. In particular, watch for air drops in the north-west corner and an onslaught of tanks from the south and south-east.

With at least eight tanks head south-west and into the first village on the western edge of the map and then the one just to the south-east. Watch out for enemy tanks lurking beneath the shroud. Under guard, evacuate the civilians to the centre of your base. Next, work on the village in the south-west corner.

The last base is on the western coast, just above the main enemy base. Don't go into here until you've cleared the base itself. For that, you'll need as many tanks as you can muster. Further along, in the south-east, you'll find a secondary base. Take over at least one building here, so that you can build an adjacent naval yard and then a transport to get the civilians to the island.

06 Siberian Conflict 1: Fresh tracks

OBJECTIVE: Prevent the seven atomic cargo trucks from leaving the area

You've got 20 minutes until the first truck tries to leave, so use the time wisely. Build a second ore truck, two mine layers and as many light tanks as you can. Keep on building more of the latter. Watch for attacks on your base, making sure you repair turrets and pillboxes at every opportunity. It's always a good idea to uncover as much of the map as possible at the start. Here, it's vital.

From this point your tactics should be similar to those used for the first mission – that is, mining exit roads like mad. The primary difference comes in the fact that the cargo trucks drop nuclear crates when destroyed. These can wipe

07



out your mines and tanks in one hit (they're particularly perilous when near your base). But they can also be used to your advantage. Get a single troop or tank to set off an explosion at the right time and you can destroy other trucks and enemy tanks with ease. Do watch out for retreating trucks, however. If they turn and head back into their own base, you're sure to lose the level.

07 Siberian Conflict 2: Trapped

OBJECTIVE: Prevent cargo trucks from leaving and destroy all enemy

Although similar in essence to previous cargo truck missions, expect a much more protracted battle. You're going to face almost constant attacks from the south-east so make sure your base is well defended with turrets, pillboxes and a few AA guns. Watch out for air drops in the middle of your base and engineers dropped to the west. Build a service depot and use it effectively throughout the mission – you'll need it.

Mine the exit roads around your base as soon as possible, as well as the coast (the latter stops enemy transports attempting to land). Work along the northern ridge and mine the exit roads. Guard the north-east corner with a

handful of tanks and watch very carefully when trucks attempt to escape.

Once the ore in the north has been depleted, you'll need to mine below the ridge, but make sure your ore trucks are protected with a group of tanks and keep away from the teslas to the south. While fighting off attacks, aim to build up a force of 20-odd tanks plus a naval yard and five destroyers. Send the latter to the south-west corner and take out an enemy ore truck or two (there

shouldn't be too many subs in your way). Now rush your tanks south and along to the east. Once in the base, destroy nearby power plants as soon as possible to disable the tesla coils. From here you shouldn't have any problem working north through the base and then east to clear up.

08 Siberian Conflict 3: Wasteland

OBJECTIVE: Destroy all Soviet forces and structures

Finally, it's back to basic all-out war. The Soviet's base is in two halves to the south of the map, so expect heavy attacks from below. You'll need to guard your base with a lot of turrets, pillboxes and AA guns. Your base will probably become quite big, so make sure you've got the middle and rear defended from air drops (pillboxes will do the trick).

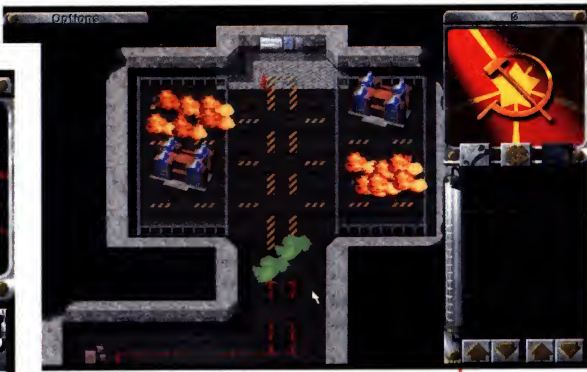
You're given two MCVs but hold one back, protecting it at all costs. When you've built up a force of tanks, and the ore in the surrounding area is depleted (you did build extra ore trucks, didn't you?), deploy the spare MCV in the north-east corner. Build a second ore refinery here and you can collect cash with ease. Do, however, keep the second base defended with a handful of tanks and two or three AA guns. We wiped out the eastern enemy base first (rolling in with 15 or so tanks), but it doesn't really matter which side you go for first.



08

06





Soviet

01 Proving Grounds

OBJECTIVE: Regain control of bases and destroy naval threat

Send your mammoth tanks to the first waypoint, crushing enemy troops on the way. Watch out for the beach landing from the south. Tanya appears in the newly uncovered base. Take her out as soon as possible by crushing her with an ore truck or shooting with the tanks. Get the ore trucks to work and send one tank to the next way point, leaving the other to defend.

Now it's simply a case of building up a force of mammoths (use the invulnerability option when you head to the next waypoint) and defending the bases - particularly the construction yard, sub-pen and refineries - from attack. Four subs should be enough to take control in the sea. Be very careful when you fire though, as they're armed with nuclear warheads. Keeping them apart is a good idea!



02 Besieged

OBJECTIVE: Track down saboteur, keep command centre intact, destroy Allies

Don't waste time chasing the saboteur around - chances are, you won't be able to kill him, until he stops in the Allied base to the east. Destroying the Allies outright is simply a matter of building up small groups of tanks and taking bases (to the east, north-east and north-west) apart bit by bit. Keep your units on the move and damage from the choppers can be kept to a minimum. Nevertheless they can cause problems so try to get the helicopter pads as soon as possible.

Don't worry too much about defence - the tesla coils and flame towers take care of most assaults (watch for damaged power plants though). Finally, don't bother building loads of subs. A couple of V2s can easily take care of the enemy destroyers (and the dangerously-positioned turrets) in the north.

03 Mousetrap

OBJECTIVE: Track down and kill Stavros

This can be done in literally three minutes. Work through the underground bunker chasing Stavros as he jumps around using Chronospheres. The given units - particularly the flamers and dogs -



should be able to make light work of the enemy troops.

Activate every switch you come to and when you find the glowing Chronosphere send in an engineer. He'll be transported to another room, where you should pick up the invulnerability box and head past the power plants to the switch at the top of the room. The Chronospheres will be now be disabled. Send all your troops, including reinforcements, to the north-west to shoot down Stavros's guards and then the man himself. Sorted.

04 Legacy of tesla

OBJECTIVE: Destroy prototype aircraft and Allied bases

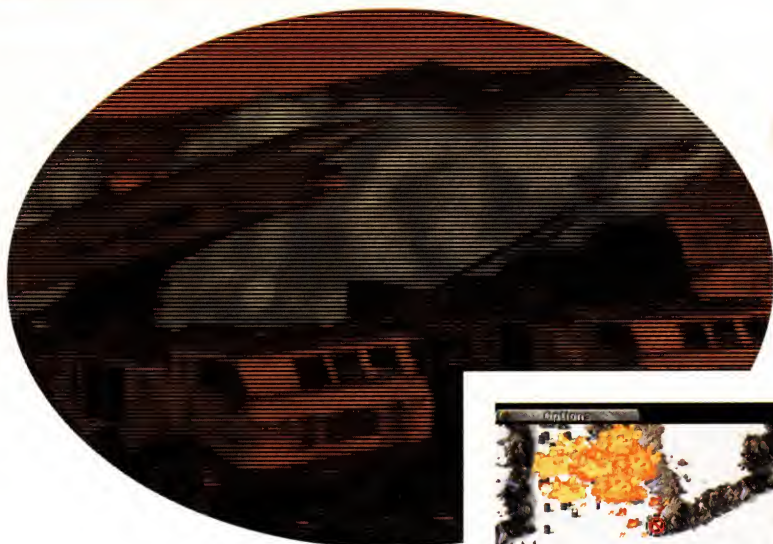
It should go without saying that you carefully protect your tesla tanks. While very useful, they have very limited armour, and should therefore be kept together and repaired at every opportunity. To win through, you've got to move fast. While uncovering the area around your base with the teslas, build two extra ore trucks and at least eight tanks. Attacks on your base will be fairly minimal but watch for artillery attacking from the south-east.

As soon as you can, head along the top of the map with

Ants in your pants

To access the four hidden 'giant ant' levels in *Counterstrike*, hold down the left shift key and click on the loudspeaker-type thing in the top-right corner of the main menu screen. After selecting a difficulty level you'll see a B-movie style cut-scene - "It came from *Red Alert*". As some sort of humanitarian force, you get to use units from both the Allies and Soviets including (in mission four), Stavros. Cool!





05



06



06 Top o' the World

OBJECTIVE: Escort cargo to north-east base

Blimey, is it even worth mentioning this level? The challenge here, presumably, is supposed to come from that fact that because you're fighting in cold conditions, your vehicles will last 60 minutes and your troops just 20. All very well but a) you don't really need to use the troops and b) you can easily finish the level in ten minutes!!!

Whatever, just send your tanks ahead of the convoy truck, along to the east, back to the west, north, back south and then finally north

through the base. The only real hazards are the turrets but get them early and they won't cause too many problems.

07 Paradox equation

OBJECTIVE: Capture Allied Chronosphere

Capturing the Chronosphere on the island to the north of the base is the objective here, so it's probably not necessary to destroy the enemy base in the north-west. We did anyway. There's nothing too complex about this mission although some of the units act unusually - normal tanks act like telsas, for example, while mammoths become giant flame throwers!

From the start, head north towards the ore before activating your MCV. The usual base-building rules apply - build a couple of extra ore trucks, defend with some tesla coils and so on. It's a good idea to build a tech centre and an iron curtain as this will give you invulnerability. If you do head west, you should find it easy to eliminate the enemy's ore trucks and over-run the base with mammoths.

Getting onto the island is simple enough - just build a sub pen, construct a few subs and hunt down the Allied ships (there's probably only two). Send at least two engineers and as many tanks as you have across the water in transports, crush the infantry, destroy the power plants and head for the Chronosphere to the west of the island. Send two engineers in to finish the level. Watch out for nuclear air strikes.

08 Nuclear escalation

OBJECTIVE: Destroy all Allied forces and structures

The co-ordinates of the potentially dangerous air fuel bombing raids can be found by capturing the relay station at the top of the western base (be careful - it's easy to accidentally destroy). A better option, however, is to stop the bombings altogether by destroying the tech centre. This is in the north-east corner, kept in darkness by an adjacent gap generator.

Or is it? We temporarily uncovered the tech centre using a spy plane and then quickly targeted it, sending in seven Yaks to destroy it. Do this and you can expect the Allies to throw everything they have at your base but, provided that you're well defended (groups of tanks plus tesla coils and/or flame turrets covering each side), this shouldn't be a problem. You'll then be clear to mop up with only the numerous turrets and AA guns scattered around the enemy bases causing any real difficulties. Incidentally, the base in the north-east is best attacked from the western side. ⑦

◀ your tanks and destroy everything in the base to the far west except the naval yard. By this point the Allies will probably be peppering your units with nukes, so it's absolutely vital to keep all your units separated and on the move. When you have plenty of money, take over the naval yard. Build a transport and a handful of destroyers and gunboats as soon as you can and move them away from the naval yard - given the opportunity the Allies will nuke it.

Now get some tanks and V2s into the transport and, guarded by ships, send it down to the east of the first isle to the southern shore of the second island. Unload quickly, move the transport away and then mop up with the tanks (it will probably take two or three trips). Your primary target is the airstrip in the centre - get this and the nukes will stop.

You've still got to wipe out the forces on the other island as well as the base to the south of yours but, provided your transport is intact and you still have tank-building facilities, this shouldn't be a problem. If you get desperate for cash at any stage, sell off the fences and walls surrounding your base and, when appropriate, the flame towers, tesla coils and (some of the) power plants.

05 Soviet Soldier Volkov and Chitzkoi

OBJECTIVE: Destroy control centre and alloy processing plant

Another easy one. Supersoldier Volkov is virtually indestructible while wonderdog Chitzkoi loves chomping troops so much, he can jump about 15 feet to get to them. Assign short cut keys to each, and send them north and after that across to east, clearing the path as you go.

Getting to the control centre and destroying the northern mini-base is pretty easy (make sure you pick up the

cash and power-up boxes), but watch out for hidden turrets, the destroyer and Tanya. Turn your attention to your base in the south. Repair the damaged structures and lure some tanks to the entrance to the base. Use the V2s to pick off the turrets and then steam in at full speed and head directly for the processing plant in the centre.

08





For the fastest car news, open it up every week.

Open up the new look Auto Express magazine and you'll find far more than ever before. As always, being weekly gives us the edge when it comes to the biggest scoops and the latest pictures. The new format is equally up front in its opinions. It reviews the cars you want in a no-nonsense forthright style and conclusions are given in a new graphic grading system. Cutting edge features, consumer help pages with bite, top issues and a sportsworld section are all given a fresh clean style. Yet, unlike the rest of the automotive industry, all these extras won't cost you more. In fact, we're reducing our cover price to only £1.30. Auto Express readers certainly know how to drive a bargain.



The magazine where car news travels fast

PC ZONE

Welcome to the **PC Zone Recommended** section. Here you'll find the cream of the games we've painstakingly reviewed and picked out over the years, plus those we feel should go down in PC gaming history as all-time Classics.



IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP IT simple, we've split it up into genres: Action games, Sports simulations, Adventure games, Flight simulations, Driving games, Role-Playing Games and Strategy games.

The top ten games of each genre are then listed, with a brief summary of the game, review score, publisher and contact number. Most of the games listed here were awarded *PC Zone* Classic status (90 per cent and above), and some managed a *PC Zone* Recommended award (80 per cent and above) at the time that they were reviewed. To achieve the highest accolade, a game must not only be very playable, entertaining and offer long-term appeal,

but it must also be original and/or offer something new and worthwhile to the genre. To this end, we've included some sequels, which although scored lower than the original title, are deemed better games (they didn't get a higher score 'cos it had already been done and therefore they weren't exactly bursting with originality – okay?), so this guide isn't a list of the highest scoring games ever reviewed by *PC Zone*, but a guide to the best games now available.

When you're reading the reviews in the rest of the magazine, please remember to bear this section in mind. The highest scoring game is supposed to represent a benchmark in a particular genre, and we will always be comparing new games with this, in accordance with the above criteria. If you use this section along with the 'In Perspective' guide that now accompanies every review you should be able to gauge pretty accurately whether a game is worth buying, whatever your personal preference and taste. As a result, you will see games dropping out of this section as new and better titles are released, so keep your eyes peeled for new entries in each of the genres.

Jeremy Wells, Editor



Recommended

Action



QUAKE (96)

The seminal 3D shoot 'em up and quite possibly the most important PC game ever released. Very atmospheric when played as a one-player game and untouchable when played over a network. Despite the fact that it's now pretty aged, it's still the office favourite. Definitely 'pour hommes'!

Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



TOMB RAIDER (94)

The first game to take the *Alone In The Dark* principles and apply them in a new, in-er-face way. The play area is vast, the puzzles are clever and it's eminently playable thanks to an incredibly agile control system. If you have a 3Dfx card, you're in for a treat.

Publisher:
Core/EIDOS (0181 780 2222)



DARK FORCES (95)

Although not as technically impressive as *Quake*, *Dark Forces* is still held up as a better one-player game by some and yet slandered by others for not having a multi-player facility. That aside, it's a thrilling 3D mix of shooting action and exploration.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



DUKE NUKEM 3D (93)

The debate rages on, and there are still an awful lot of people who rate *Duke* over *Quake*. It's not as technically impressive, but brags gameplay by the bucketload in one-player mode and when played over a network.

Publisher:
EIDOS Interactive (0181 780 2222)



FADE TO BLACK (94)

The unofficial sequel to the excellent *Flashback*, this is a near-perfect blend of third-person exploration and combat action. The technical pre-cursor to the fantastic *Tomb Raider*, it's a classic in its own right.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



DARKLIGHT CONFLICT (92)

It might not have a mega-budget cast or a film licence, but *Darklight* knocks spots off just about every other space combat sim there is. It looks utterly fantastic and the 3D engine is quite superb and very fast. No campaign mode, but plenty of action.

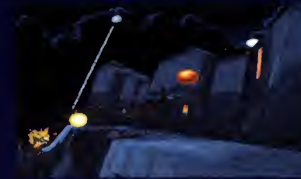
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



PRIVATEER 2: THE DARKENING (94)

The ultimate mix of space combat, *Elite*-style trading and FMV action, *Privateer 2* was the first big budget release from Origin to use live action in a positive way. Packed with stars, this is pukka stuff.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



MAGIC CARPET 2 (92)

The original wooed us with its speed and smoothness – this is even better, with new night-time bits, monsters and a very useful on-line help system. Technically exquisite, the game engine's yet to be bettered.

Publisher:
Bullfrog/EA (01753 549442)



TIE FIGHTER (94)

Still rated by many as the finest space combat sim ever released, it successfully blends all the kudos of *Star Wars* with a wicked new engine for super-fast *TIE* on *X-Wing* fisticuffs.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES (90)

Of all the *HERC*-based games, this is the best. Successfully mixing real-time combat action with a thoroughly stomping engine, it's action-packed and fab over a network.

Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)

Driving



CARMAGEDDON (95)

Awesome arcade-style racer that's heavy on the hit 'n' run and gameplay. Loads of different cars to choose from, plenty of tracks, three ways to play and a fab multi-player network mode make this one of the most entertaining driving games ever.

Publisher:
SCI (0171 585 3308)



NASCAR RACING 2 (92)

A worthy upgrade of the original game, featuring a new, smoother 3D engine, more controllable cars, improved opponent AI, a simple single-screen car set-up and a multi-player network option. With the constant stream of headset messages that add atmosphere this is a racing sim fan must.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



NETWORK Q RAC RALLY (94)

The seminal rally racer from Europress is the ultimate in skiddy, slidey action. 27 (count 'em) stages, loads of cars, a fantastic eight-way network option and varied terrain and conditions make this superior to the limited *Sega Rally*. Go buy it!

Publisher:
Europress Software (01625 859444)



INDYCAR 2 (90)

The only real alternative to *F1GP2*, if you don't mind going round and round in circles, but still crave that unbelievable detail. Technically mind-blowing, though a little chuggy on anything but a high-end Pentium in SVGA mode.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)



SCREAMER 2 (93)

Whereas the first game cocked its hat at the classic *Ridge Racer*, this game is *Sega Rally* in just about every way but name – except that it's better in every way. Like *TNFS* it's very much an arcade, which makes it ideal for a quick fix.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



POD (90)

One of the first racing games to support 3DFX, Direct3D and MMX. The graphics are awesome (understatement of the year) and with new cars, tracks and power-ups promised to be posted regularly on the Internet, you'll never get bored.

Publisher:
Ubi Soft (0181 941 9000)



MICRO MACHINES 2 (93)

The console classic is converted to the PC as new tracks provide a new challenge. The easy to use control system means it's user-friendly for the uninitiated. This version comes with a track designer.

Publisher:
Codemasters (01926 814132)



THE NEED FOR SPEED (89)

Exciting arcade racing action at its best with a good selection of cars and road tracks. Suicidal oncoming traffic and angry cops entrench *TNFS* firmly within the 'arcade' game sector.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 2 (92)

The amazing sequel to the greatest F1 driving sim ever. Updated brilliantly for the 94/95 season with all-new detailed circuits, cars and teams. Ninja Pentium needed to run the hi-res mode – but it's still great.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



DESTRUCTION DERBY 2 (86)

Another sequel, but this one's actually much better than the first game. The tracks are much improved, the cars handle much better and there's loads more options. Worth buying even if you own the original.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)

Sports



LINKS LS (94)

The classic golf sim gets a much needed update, and unsurprisingly it's fab. There's more gameplay options, gorgeous graphics and a redesigned menu and view selection system which make it better than ever. There's even a built-in upgrader for all the old data disk courses you splashed out on.

Publisher:
EIDOS Interactive (0181 780 2222)



NHL HOCKEY 97 (90)

Visually slick and very playable, this 'all-new' updated *NHL* game features some new graphical tweaks and a smoother, faster engine. There's a handful of national sides thrown in as well as the most recently completed season's statistics and teams.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



PGA TOUR 96 (94)

There's little choice between *PGA Tour 96* and *PGA European Tour*, it just depends on which accents and jumpers you prefer. Both offer fantastic graphics, an easy to use control method and plenty of customisable play options. Golfing at its best.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



PRO PINBALL: THE WEB (90)

There are loads of PC pinball games, but *The Web* is the finest. You may only get to play on one table, but it's so detailed and full of features it doesn't matter. Accurate ball physics and distracting bonus games make it the ultimate in pinball action.

Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



ACTUA SOCCER (92)

Still the best soccer game on the PC, thanks to a super 3D polygonal engine and motion captured players. One-player games might be frustrating, but In two-player mode it excels, and Barry Davies provides some knockout commentary.

Publisher:
Gremlin Interactive (01142 753423)



MADDEN NFL 97 (87)

This PC incarnation is well up to the quality seen on the console versions, with all the features and slick presentation we now assume as standard for an EA Sports release. The best American footie game on the PC, but those graphics come at a price.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



NBA LIVE 97 (92)

Much better than the previous version, which lacked drive, this offering is well put together. With excellent graphics, sound effects and a hip soundtrack, thankfully it plays as good as it looks.

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



FIFA SOCCER 97 (84)

Despite the hype, it's not the best soccer sim on the market. If you're familiar with the control system, are wooed by glossy presentation and are a bit of a *FIFA*-head at heart, you'll like it. Otherwise...

Publisher:
EA Sports (01753 549442)



VIRTUAL POOL (91)

Simple but very playable pool sim with an ingenious mouse-drag control system and impressive engine. One-player games are fun, two-player games and network links are even better.

Publisher:
Interplay (01628 423666)



FRONT PAGE SPORTS BASEBALL (85)

An interesting game that nicks the best bits from other baseball games. Gameplay is a tad on the uninspired side as things plod along, but then this is a baseball game.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Adventures



ALONE IN THE DARK 3 (95)

Better than the previous *AITD* instalments, *Alone 3* is a tense, ambient tale of Navajo Indian magic and reincarnation, that unfolds in the usual *AITD* manner. Now available as part of a compilation budget pack.

Publisher:
Infogrames (0181 738 8199)



INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS (93)

Follow a post-*Raiders* Indy in his search for the submerged metropolis. Three ways to play make for a high replayability factor, and the inter-character banter is brilliant.

Publisher:
LucasArts/VIE (0171 368 2255)



BIOFORGE (95)

Futuristic *Alone In The Dark*-style game with impressive graphics, puzzles and soundtrack. Often preferred over *AITD* games as its unique blend of arcade combat is explosive. The only drag is EA's refusal to make a sequel for it.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE (93)

Adeline's visually stunning isometric journey through the surreal land of Twinsun stole our hearts in 1995. The gloriously animated characters really bring the static backgrounds to life. *LBA* is pretty difficult, but time investment is worthwhile.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SYSTEM SHOCK (95)

This futuristic first-person cyberpunk adventure from the makers of *Ultima* was initially overlooked by many people. Now available on budget, this is a must-buy for those new to the game. The graphics might be a little dated, but the atmosphere is invigorating.

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



SAM & MAX (93)

Steve Purcell's hilarious dog/rabbit 'freelance police' duo's first and only PC outing, in which they need to solve a host of bizarre puzzles. An all-talkie adventure with a gag-laden script, this is an essential budget-priced purchase even if you're not a massive point-and-click fan.

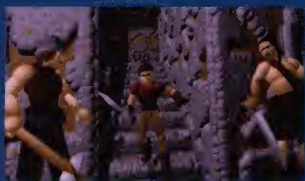
Publisher:
US Gold (0121 625 3388)



STAR TREK TNG: A FINAL UNITY (94)

A style oozer. At times it's as if you're inside a *Star Trek: TNG* episode. Non-linear and beautifully presented, it's a Trek-head must-buy. Yet to be bettered.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



ECSTASICA II (90)

We dubbed it "An adventure with balls". It's hard, but one of the most rewarding adventures we've ever seen. It constantly surprises and is sure to keep even the most battle-weary adventure fan busy for weeks.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



DISCWORD II (93)

Perfect Entertainment's immaculate follow-up to *Discworld* follows would-be wizard Rincewind in his search for the missing Grim Reaper. Not as hard as the first game, but bigger and better looking. *Discworld 2* is a universally appealing adventure game.

Publisher:
Psygnosis (0151 282 3000)



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND 2: LECHUCK'S REVENGE (PRE-PC ZONE)

Anyone with even a casual interest in adventures must have this game. The graphics look dated, but the one-liners are side-splitters. And it's on budget!

Publisher:
Virgin (0171 368 2255)

Role-Playing Games



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD 2: LABYRINTH OF WORLDS (94)

This improves on almost every aspect of its prequel, *The Stygian Abyss*. You explore a complex, ever-evolving dungeon; it has unsurpassed atmosphere and interaction.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



RAVENLOFT: STONE PROPHET (78)

A great improvement overSSI's previous AD&D *Ravenloft* RPGs. The graphics are average but the intuitive spell/combat system is a joy.

Publisher:
Mindscape (01444 246333)



ULTIMA VII (89)

Arguably the best of all the *Ultima* games, *Ultima VII* blends character interaction with the exploration of the detailed world of Britannia. This is the last of the *Ultima* series to give you complete party control. Soon to reappear as *Ultima On-Line*.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD: THE STYGIAN ABYSS (PRE-PC ZONE)

This one took RPGs away from first-person tile-based RPGs. Amazing architecture, witty characterisations, layers of storyline and the best ending of any computer game in history. Buy it and believe it.

Publisher:
Origin/EA (01753 549442)



DIABLO (88)

Diablo is standard hack 'n' slash fare but the game's designers pull the whole thing off with such style that the overall game experience is addictive. A great storyline compensates for repetitive arcade combat, and supremely detailed animations makes it a great coffee-table game.

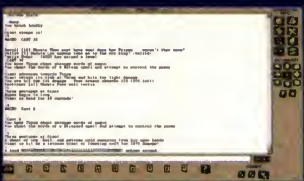
Publisher:
Zablab/Blizzard (01626 332233)



EYE OF THE BEHOLDER II (PRE-PC ZONE)

It's one of those 'olde-worlde', first-person RPGs, but its progressive, party-based gameplay and subtle story elements set it worlds apart from all the other dross. The flick screen graphics are somewhat dated, but dungeon design is still worth a look.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



TERRIS (88)

A MUD in the old-school style of text-based RPGs, but so horribly addictive that we're still playing it today. *Terris* has enough quests, puzzles and monsters to keep you going for days. The gameplay is excellent, if you can handle the texty-ness of it all.

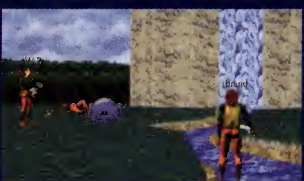
Publisher:
AOL (0800 2797444)



LANDS OF LORE (PRE-PC ZONE)

Graphics and gameplay! Westwood Studios' graphical flair shines through in this push-scrolling story about a witch in a purple cloak. Adding non-player characters to your party still keeps the game interesting. CD version features Patrick Stewart.

Publisher:
VIE (0171 368 2255)



MERIDIAN 59 (86)

This ground-breaking on-line RPG, though cursed with garish and horrible graphics, allows thousands of people to interact with each other in the same fantasy universe at the same time. Currently one of the best on-line multi-player RPGs around.

Publisher:
3DO Company (0181 541 4082)



BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR (PRE-PC ZONE)

First-person perspective RPG with a huge game world and fairly complex battle system. Failed to take the RPG crown from *Ultima* due to limited character interaction, but a worthy second-hand buy.

Publisher:
Sierra (0118 920 9100)

Strategy



SYNDICATE WARS (95)

One of the best strategy games of all time gets a sequel, and what a sequel it is too: intricate levels, gorgeous graphics and enough gratuitous violence to keep anyone happy.

Publisher:
EA/Bullfrog (01753 549442)



SETTLERS 2 (92)

Manage little people, build stuff for their little towns, then kick the shit out of the opposition. *Settlers 2* is a brilliant game, but make sure you've got plenty of time on your hands. It really is that addictive!

Publisher:
Zabrac (01626 332233)



X-COM 2: TERROR FROM THE DEEP (94)

It's showing its age graphically but who cares when it's so addictive? With turn-based combat, resource management and sophisticated research trees, *TFTD* deserves to be in any strategy fan's collection.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



SIMCITY 2000 (92)

A classic game that deserves its reputation as one of the all-time greats in the strategy world. Build and maintain the city of your dreams and cope with all the problems a real-life Mayor would come up against. It's a lot more fun than it sounds, trust us.

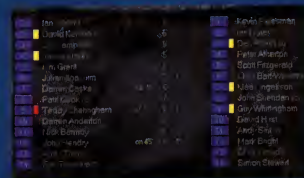
Publisher:
Maxis (0171 505 1500)



COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT (94)

...or C&C in SVGA with a few new units to be more exact. It's a testament to the original game's addictive gameplay that the sequel can get away with adding few new features and still be enormous fun to play. Still well worth buying.

Publisher:
Virgin (0171 368 2255)



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2 (90)

So you want to be a football manager, eh? Well so does our Jeremy, which is why he spends his life playing this, the most realistic, addictive football management game available, and not a spreadsheet as Chris keeps telling everyone. Heathen!

Publisher:
EIDOS (0181 780 2222)



PUZZLE BOBBLE (94)

We can't agree where *Puzzle Bobble* fits in *PC Zone Recommends*. Does it belong in here, with the *Civs* and *Sims* of the PC gaming world, or should it go in the action section? Who cares, as long as it's in...

Publisher:
GT Interactive (0171 258 3791)



CIVILIZATION 2 (90)

Explore the world, conquer territories and research new technologies in one of the most successful strategy games ever. It's not that different to the first one but it merits a '90s update and place here.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



MASTER OF ORION 2 (92)

Very sophisticated space exploration/strategy game that rewards long-term play. You can play it for months and still find new things to research. If you're willing to put the time into it, *Orion 2* will stay on your hard drive for aeons.

Publisher:
MicroProse (01454 893893)



WARCRAFT 2 (82)

Warcraft 2 is C&C in Tolkienesque clothing, basically. It was a bigger hit with you lot than it was with us here at *Zone*, which is why it's gatecrashing our hot games section. Certainly a worthwhile purchase.

Publisher:
Zabrac (01626 332233)

Flight Simulations



EF2000 (97)

With fantastic graphics and a very realistic flight model, this is one of the best flight sims on the PC. Not even Microsoft's mighty *Flight Sim* can topple it from the top of the *PC Zone* prop-head ladder.

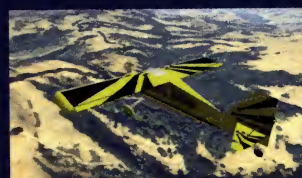
Publisher:
Ocean/DID (0161 832 6633)



US MARINE FIGHTERS (92)

Lovely graphics and a realistic enough flight model. Originally released as a mission disk for *US Navy Fighters*, *Marine Fighters* now comes as part of *US Navy Fighters Gold* pack, so go get that instead!

Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



FLIGHT UNLIMITED (96)

This was the first flight sim to sport truly amazing graphics and a frighteningly realistic flight model. You don't get to kill anyone (just like *Flight Sim 95*) but it still stands up well against today's competition, and you still need a beefy machine to fly it.

Publisher:
Looking Glass/Virgin (0171 368 2255)



FLYING CORPS (92)

Action-packed WWI flight sim with neat graphics. Nostalgic gamers will recall *Red Baron* as one of the greatest WWI flight sims ever – this improves on the old classic to become the best WWI sim currently available for the PC.

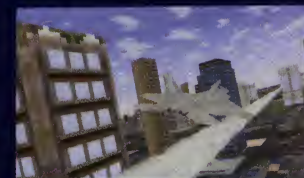
Publisher:
Empire Interactive (0181 343 7337)



APACHE LONGBOW (96)

The *EF2000* of helicopter sims in as much as it marries fab graphics with a realistic flight model. The structure encourages you to adopt the same tactics as a real Apache pilot (or so we're told) and the missions are challenging and varied enough to keep you at it for weeks. It's big, too.

Publisher:
Digital Integration (01276 684959)



JETFIGHTER III (91)

The long-awaited follow-up to one of the most popular sims ever. Fly over three and a half million square miles of accurately-mapped terrain of most of South America. It really is 'just like being there'. Oh yeah, you get to shoot things too, but sadly there's no duty free option.

Publisher:
EIDOS Interactive (0181 780 2222)



FLIGHT SIM 95 (95)

The longest-running and most successful PC flight sim. An incredibly realistic flight model prompted the US Air Force to use this software as a training tool for their pilots. (But you don't get to shoot anything.)

Publisher:
Microsoft (0181 242 4194)



HIND (90)

Ugly helicopter in decent flight sim shock! For some people this game is maybe a tad too realistic, in as much as the real-life Hind itself is very difficult to fly. Purists will love it though.

Publisher:
Digital Integration (01276 684959)



SU27 FLANKER (95)

One for flight sim purists. Admittedly the graphics are crap, but our reviewer raved about it. A great flight model and superb mission builder make it an essential buy for prop-heads everywhere, just don't expect your best mate to be impressed.

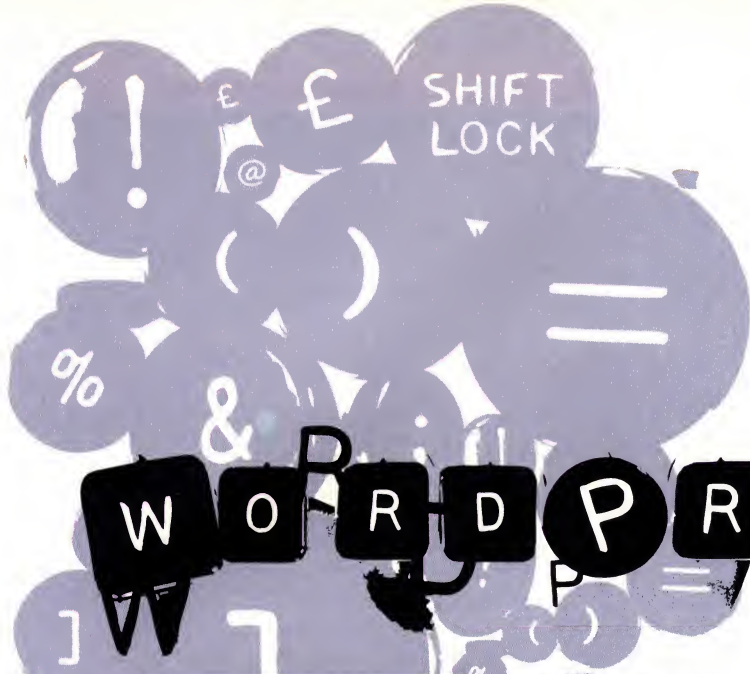
Publisher:
Electronic Arts (01753 549442)



A-10 CUBA (90)

Functional graphics (cough) for a game that captures the imagination, mainly because the plane is an absolute joy to fly. Slightly limited with the absence of a fully-fledged campaign but great fun nonetheless, and pretty speedy on a modest Pentium.

Publisher:
Activision (01895 456700)



This month: confusing missives from unhinged Australians concerning our portraits, frame rates are a swindle, *Vanity Fair* pulled the trigger, and bullying. Cracking the whip: Charlie Brooker.



WORD PROCESSOR

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NB: PC Zone retain the right
to edit, rewrite and change
all correspondence in order to
make ourselves appear even
more smug, funny and witty.

A QUICK WORD

If you decide to print my letter, feel free to shorten it a bit...
Niels Martin Low, e-mail

Nope – it's still too long for my liking.

HOLE TALK - PART ONE

When you keep adding millions and millions of polygons to a character you stop seeing any difference. Game developers can't sell on graphics anymore and have forgotten how to be creative. The hole industry goes to hell...

**Niels Martin Low (again),
e-mail**

The asshole industry seems to be thriving, though, judging by this letters page.

HOLE TALK - PART TWO

I was just reading the fine print around the Cybertwats comic, which mentioned that *Vanity Fair* had done an article on the Spice Girls. This proved what I already knew – that they're a bunch of moronic bimbos. I'd just like to mention a certain incident from a

few years ago with when *Vanity Fair* interviewed Courtney Love, then husband (*Er, I think you mean wife – CB*) of Kurt Cobain.

Everything was going fine for the two until the interview. Courtney, who was rather high on something while the interview was going on (according to *Come As You Are*, by Michael Azeroth). *Vanity Fair* twisted it to



HOT Topic

Edited by Paul Mallinson

PC Zone's regular discussion forum full of ranting lunatics and 'funny buggers' who have been allowed to let their opinions loose. We pose the question, you give the answers.



WHAT WAS IT WE ASKED LAST month? Oh, that's right – the reasonably bold 'do reviews in magazines influence your decision to buy games?', and to kick things off, **Andy** from Ipswich roars in with an answer: "Yes, in a word, they do. (Sorry, six words.) Cheers!" Which is the best place to start – on a positive note. Master of the blindingly obvious, **Richard Cobbett**, returns to the Hot Topic forum once again: "If a magazine gives something 2%, then yes: it does influence my buying." Fair enough Richard. Keep writing those letters in.

"Well, I think you're being deliberately controversial with that question," says **Oliver Lan**. Us? Controversial? Are we really putting our reputation on the line here? If our fair magazine doesn't help with your game buying, then what does?

Oliver continues: "I don't see it as reviewers choosing games for the people – rather as them giving help and advice. Reviews certainly

do influence me. Quite simply, there aren't many other sources of information out there – apart from word-of-mouth (or modem) it's very difficult to otherwise find out just how good a game is. Of course games are subjective, but there are a few magazines out there and more often than not they agree to some extent. When they don't, it's usually possible to see why they disagree and what sort of games the reviewer likes to play – and if I like what they like, I'm far more likely to buy." Sensibly put by Mr Lan, and he has a suggestion to offer too: "It can be a problem that a review does give too much weight (well, all the weight) to a single person's opinion. I think I'd like to see more 'second opinion' kind of stuff in magazines, and make that influence the score. After all in a few month's time the score is all that really lasts." It's a valid point he makes, but here at PC Zone – where game scores are discussed and seconded by the rest of the team before going to print – there's often not much

make Kurt and Courtney look like losers, not that it changed my impression of them – I still love Nirvana. I never read the interview itself – in fact I never read music mags (they're crap).

Now just because *Vanity Fair* say the Spice Girls are morons doesn't mean it's true – in fact it's probably the opposite. However, just because I'm sticking up for the Spice Girls doesn't mean I like them, I still think they should be put down for the good of the community. Just don't listen to *Vanity Fair*, because they lie (*Erm, allegedly – CB*), and I don't want to see someone's career fucked up because of them – Nirvana's sales apparently went down after the interview with Courtney. The only reason she agreed to do it was because she was high.

Incidentally, England seems to be the only country really obsessed with the Spice Girls, (you sad, sad bunch of people you) but then again, I only buy computer mags, so how the hell would I know?

Daniel Burke,
pburke@camtech.net.au

Er, yeah... but we never even mentioned *Vanity Fair* in the first place. Still, who cares when you're on a roll, eh Daniel?

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT

Some of your readers – meaning me – are old enough to have our own kids now. They like playing games, but the *PC Zone* Classics are often too difficult for them. A 'suitable for sprogs' icon on reviews and a separate listing in the recommended section would be great. For example,

my kids love *Earthworm Jim* but not *Dark Forces*. They can play *PGA Euro Tour* and *Actua Soccer* but can't handle games like *F1GP2* and *EF2000*. Will they enjoy *Psychosis' Formula 1*, *NBA Live 97* or *Micro Machines 2*? I don't know!

John, e-mail

A good idea John, but with one major flaw: we don't give a shit about kids.

GREAT FRAME RATE DEBATE

What the hell is all the commotion about high frame rates in aid of? I defy anyone to tell the difference between 30 and 60 fps – after all, PAL and NTSC televisions operate at 24 and 30fps respectively, and images only stay on the retina for about 0.03 seconds (which means that our view of the world is updated at about 35fps – that's why fast moving things blur, you stupid stupid clod, you). So why do software manufacturers proudly proclaim '60FPS ACTION! YOU'LL SPOOGE UNTIL YOU DROWN! CONSUME, YOU MAGGOTS!'. Eh?

El Bonko Grande, e-mail

PS *The Legendary Journeys Of Hercules* is the greatest non-British work of satire in history, and must be supported.

Not sure about the frame rate argument, but I wholeheartedly agree with your final point.

UNDILUTED TEDIUM

My letter is both a technical query and a complaint aimed towards Microsoft. Myself and my brother both already own a copy of Windows 95, while my

father still runs Windows 3.1 on the two computers he uses for home business. He's considering updating one of these to Windows 95 leaving the other with 3.1... blah blah blah... accountancy and payrolls... blah blah... I phoned up Microsoft's technical support department but didn't have a product ID number so basically they couldn't help me... blah blah blah... what is the matter with

these people?... blah blah blah...

Can you help me please? Can you restore from floppy backed-up copies of MS-DOS based programs from 3.1 onto Windows 95 and can both systems work concurrently? Finally, if your recommendation is to purchase Windows 95 with a new non-DOS payroll program, are there any you can recommend?

AC Bunn, Fleetwood ▶

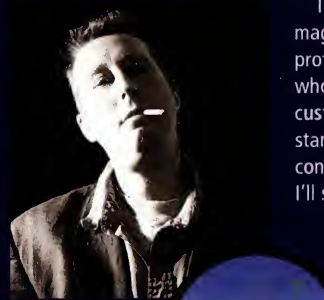
Letter of the Month

A SOUR-FACED JACK-OFF WRITES

I've just read the 'blueprint' of *688i Hunter Killer* in the May issue of *PC Zone*. I love sub sims, and have to say that it's the most crappy piece of 'journalism' I've encountered for some time. Duncan MacDonald came over like some Beavis & Butt-Head wannabe who's spent most of his puerile adolescence dropping acid or smoking dope – he was probably on the stuff when he wrote this sorry excuse for an article. He obviously has no real enthusiasm for sub sims or even *naval* sims as a whole, or he might've given us some real *meat* rather than just a 'geewhizman' blancmange of waffle, and concentrated on telling us some real technical details of how this sim works, and how it's better/worse than others that have gone before it. In fact, he even seems to have stuffed up interviewing Terry Jones, to the point that Jones gave him the elbow. What a prize twat!

I pay good money for my *PC* magazines, and I expect you to be professional enough to employ writers who aren't brain dead so I, as your customer, can read 'professional standard' articles. If you're going to continue to employ idiots like Duncan, I'll stop buying your magazine.

Kim White, Melbourne, Australia



Duncan 'Bush Whacker' MacDonald.

Thanks for that, Kim. Do write back as soon as you've pulled that stick out of your arse.

call for it. Having said that, we've used second opinions before – on some of the bigger, more important, reviews – and there's a good chance we'll see more in the future.

Lee Brown from Aberdeen writes in with a point I was looking forward to answering:

"If a reviewer generally likes a certain type of game and is asked to review a game fitting into that category then he'll automatically give



it a better first impression. Whereas if a reviewer doesn't like that type of game he will be making harsher judgements about the small things he may have 'overlooked' had he liked the game type." Which is why we give certain types of games to certain type of reviewers – we don't see the point in giving a flight sim to a reviewer who doesn't like flight sims. Not all magazines do this though, which can sometimes lead to scoring inconsistencies.

Andrew Young from Telford agrees we're doing the right thing: "Obviously, reviews can only influence people if the type of game on review appeals to the reader – no matter how much 'PC X' magazine tells me how fabulously good it is. I'm not going to buy *Darts Master 3D Turbo*, no matter how good the magazines say it is, if darts (the topless variant or not) isn't my thing!" And there's far more to consider that just the score, he reminds us: "Most people make an educated guess based on various factors as

to if a game is any good or not. Publisher, press opinion and personal recommendations for example, all play a part in my decision making process.

"Pricing can also be influential. Take *Red Alert* (£29.99) and *Gabriel Knight: The Beast Within* (£14.99 on budget) for example – two titles with good press reviews, but what really made me buy them without hesitation was the (relatively speaking) lower price."

"Hmm. The opposite is true for me," says Paul Smith-Crallan from Wokingham. "I've bought most of my games on the strength of hype or a deep desire to want to have a game (being the simple fool I am). I usually hear about a game about three months before it comes out, see a few screenshots and then rush out and get it when it comes out. So far, I haven't really gone wrong with my buying decisions, and when the mags review the games I buy they usually get good scores. So as far as I know I have never bought a game

I 've edited your letter down to a slightly more palatable length, Mr Bunn, not because space is at a premium, but because you're such a crashing bore. I've only reprinted it here to afford you an opportunity to cut it out and stick it somewhere uncomfortable. Personally, I'm no fan of the big M – but I fail to see why their tech support people should waste their time listening to you crack on about your dad's poxy payroll software when there are valid users with valid ID numbers waiting behind you in the phone queue, grinding their teeth to powder in Muzak hell. Why should we – a games magazine – help you sort out your dreary problem anyway? Snivelling, self-important whiners like you are solely to blame for perpetuating the careers of other snivelling, self-important whiners – the ones who make a small fortune writing columns for the Daily Mail or presenting TV shows like Watchdog. Just thinking about it makes me sick to my stomach.

Besides, if Microsoft can't help you, why not call the company who manufacture that accursed payroll software in the first place, eh? Or is the serial number for that 'missing' as well?

PHOTO LOVE

I want to heartily congratulate you on the interesting new visual format of *PC Zone*. The reading experience is more personal for me now that you've added photos of some of the writers and I can see what they actually look like. I can just imagine sitting in a smoke-clouded

pub across an alcohol-stained table from an inebriated Charlie Brooker discussing the pros and cons of a new game. He really does look like the cynical, substance-abusing, no-life bastard he gives the impression of being. Great!

Robert Stoner,
Brisbane, Australia

Picture me waking up in bed alongside you the morning after that night in the pub, my lips swollen from a prolonged night of drunken kisses, my hair matted down with the dried remains of spilt body fluids, and I think you'll go off the whole photo idea pretty rapidly.

BULLY FOR YOU

There's this kid at my school who's very small, but he thinks a lot of himself and for his size has an abnormally large mouth which shits abuse at people (who are usually taller than him). I'm writing to you because he reads *PC Zone*, so if you could verbally abuse the little prick it would embarrass him so much. His name is (*Edited out to avoid unnecessary anguish* – CB) and he thinks *Carmageddon* is shite. Let your imaginations run riot as you hurl abuse at him. HA HA HA!

Rufus Ward,
Lancaster



Witness for yourselves our very own Charlie Brooker before and after he reviewed *Cyberbikes* – 'nuff said.

That's extremely petty and mean-spirited of you, Rufus. Not to mention childish. I only hope the teachers at your school manage to introduce a few rudimentary social graces into the spiteful and destructive mindset you seem hell-bent upon developing. Sadly I fear their efforts are doomed to fail. For you and your friends, Rufus,

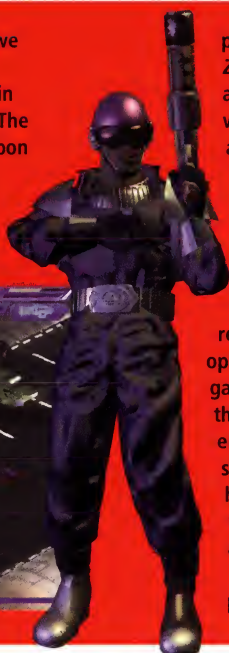
the outlook is bleak – eking out the rest of your days on the dole; a soulless, nondescript existence coloured only by brief episodes of shop-lifting, ram-raiding and petty street crime, just like the rest of your mewling, selfish generation. All around us civilisation is disintegrating, and all you can do is sit there and pick on your own friends. Heaven help us all.

A QUESTION OF GENRE

I had nothing else to do, so I decided to write to you and have a long moan at all the games companies out there who seem to think they can take a game, clone it under a different name and then expect to sell a load of them to us.

on the strength of a review." Maybe we should give the guy a job here?

Darren Clarke, located somewhere in Derbyshire, e-mailed us his opinion: "The only reason to buy a game is based upon playing it or at least seeing a demo. The *PC Zone* reviews (and this holds true for all leisure mags) are good for a laugh and can inform of



potential problems, but I use *PC Zone*'s score purely as a guideline and often find myself disagreeing with your opinions, as much as agreeing with them. For example: *Syndicate Wars* – couldn't stand it at all having loved the previous two." That's your opinion after all, and we respect that. Darren continues: "The problem with magazine reviews is that we're getting the opinion of someone who plays games for a living, where as we, the buying public, play games for enjoyment. If a reviewer sees something different they cry hallelujah! But we all sit here wondering what the fuss was about."

So you're saying we don't play games for enjoyment? Quite

wrong. Bloody hell – you're wrong! Every single person on the *PC Zone* team plays games for enjoyment, and to suggest otherwise shows a complete lack of respect and understanding on your part. Remember: *PC Zone* is created by gamers, for gamers – I fear you may be mistaking us for other, lesser PC games mags...

Next month's topic:

What did you think of *Carmageddon*? Do you think it went too far? Is it alright to shoot people with guns in these games, but not run them over in cars? Should it be banned? What was YOUR reaction? Let us know...

Join in the big debate

Write: Hot Topic, *PC Zone*, Dennis Publishing Ltd., 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ. WWW: Hot Topic chat forum at www.pczone.co.uk. CIX: Hot Topic in the *PC Zone* conference. E-mail: pczone@cix.co.uk.

Names in print

I sent you one of the most important letters you'll ever receive and you didn't print it. In case the letter didn't reach you I've sent it again.

Dan, e-mail

A long with this message, Dan sent a Red Alert tip. Several times. Complete with a binary attachment. To my personal e-mail address. Now I'm rewarding him with the thrill of seeing his name in print. Because I'm an arse.

I SHALL EXPECT TO SEE THIS LETTER IN PRINT IN YOUR MAGAZINE IN THE NEXT ISSUE OR ELSE!!!

Andy, e-mail

O h yeah, and I'm spineless too.

An example of this is in last month's issue. The game in question? *Cave Wars*. It looks exactly the same as *Red Alert*, albeit with a slightly different theme, except one thing – it was never going to be as good. The producers of *Cave Wars*, EIDOS, are a highly talented bunch and therefore can surely come up with something more original than this. I am fully aware that you gave *Cave Wars* a highly respectable 81 per cent, but why would anyone want to purchase this when *Red Alert*, a 94 per cent game, is also available is beyond me. If all game developers followed the lead set by companies like SCI, who have just released the outstandingly original and brilliantly fun *Carmageddon*, our gaming shops would be a better place. Although SCI may not have a long line of successful titles to their name, when they do release one it turns out to be bloody superb!

Anyway, I have probably wasted enough of your valuable magazine space as it is (YES! – Ed.) so I'll leave it at that.

Yours moaningly,

Alistair Donegan

P.S. Which game should I buy? *Tomb Raider* or *MDK*?

O kay, point taken. But how do you think we feel having to see endless demos of C&C clones that all look

the same? And *Tomb Raider* clones? And *Quake* clones? You've just got to accept that real-time strategy games (or C&C clones) are a genre – like duh? C&C happens to be the benchmark by which all others are judged and it's not a case of developers being unoriginal, but thinking along the lines of "well if they liked C&C, let's give them some more". Games genres develop because people copy ideas and improve on them. That's why we got *Quake* from *Doom*, *Dark Forces* from *Doom* and *Hexen II* from *Quake*. We can expect a few *Carmageddon* clones to appear soon too. *Carmageddon* is an original, but essentially it's just another driving game – so although SCI should still be congratulated for developing the genre further, we don't suggest that you start unzipping their flies just yet. Or maybe that's what this letter is really all about. Perhaps your name isn't Alistair at all. Maybe it's Quentin. Do you have strange dreams about men in uniform. Sailors perhaps? Come to think of it, SCI are based in Southampton. Fancy yourself as a bit of a docker boy do ya?

In answer to your PS – *Tomb Raider* is coming out on budget soon, so buy that and *MDK* as well – they're both excellent. **Z**



The 'not bad' *Cave Wars* is one of the best C&C clones we've seen of late.

AlfaTwin

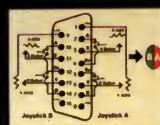
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PC FORMAT GOLD

PC FORMAT MAGAZINE
SEPTEMBER 1996 ISSUE

"One of the most annoying problems of PC gaming has finally been solved!"
PC Player 7/96

Patent Pending



Although most PCs have only one game port the design actually supports two joysticks (A & B). Advanced sticks that sport four buttons, throttle and rudder controls or coolie caps, make use of the second joystick (B) controls. When two sticks are connected only two fire buttons per stick are available.



Select single player mode and the AlfaTwin allows you to switch between two joysticks. In this mode, all the functions of the stick are supported. To select your stick, simply press the fire button of the controller you wish to use.



In two player mode, both joysticks can be activated at the same time for two-player games. However, due to the design of the IBM joystick port, the advanced functions of the joysticks are not supported.



You can cascade up to three AlfaTwins together. This allows four different joysticks to be connected simultaneously. Moreover, the six foot long cable brings the AlfaTwin round to the front of your desk, freeing you from the hassle of plugging/unplugging your joystick from the back of the computer.



AlfaCommander Pro



AlfaPilot Plus

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"This all works without having to pull out all the cables, ain't that wonderful? I cannot say anything else except congratulations with a very nice product."

Edu Oskam, Technical Support Specialist (Gravis Europe/Holland)



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Comment

This month our very own **Charlie Brooker** asks why do PC games get such a bad deal on TV?

TV GO HOME!

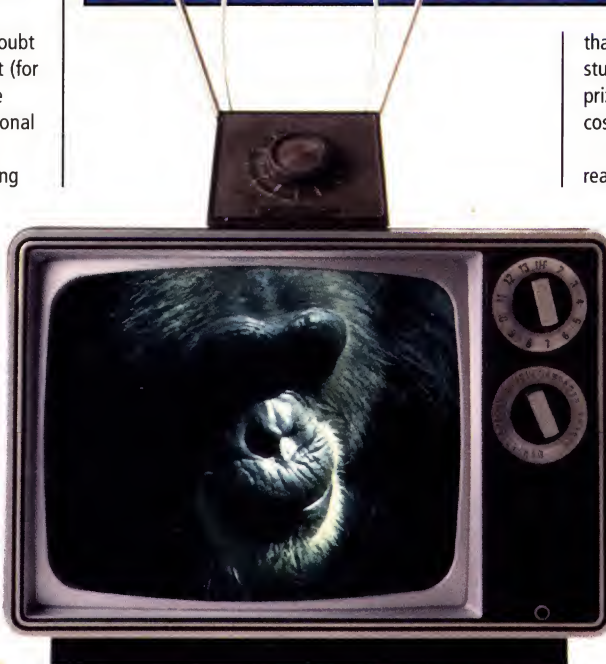


GELEVISION: THE DRUG OF THE NATION. BREEDING IGNORANCE, AND feeding radiation. And offering little or no decent coverage of the computer gaming world whatsoever. Okay, *Gamesmaster* isn't too bad – although the braying teenage audience deserve to have their lips sewn together with wire – but now that Dominik Diamond's rumoured to be jumping ship, it'll have to fight hard to retain viewers (many of whom will be praying to God that Dexter Fletcher, the undisputed King of nervy, confused presentation, won't be allowed within ten miles of the studio). So what's left?

A handful of mewling, self-satisfied little shits, that's what. I'm talking about those loathsome, stunted tykes that show up with tooth-grinding regularity on shows such as *Live And Kicking* and *The Big Breakfast*. These deeply hateful imbeciles (who effortlessly exude the same kind of infuriating smugness the Conservative Party displayed after the 1992 General Election), are usually filmed running around outdoors (in a variety of 'zany' camera angles that the producers misguidedly think signify 'dynamic youth', but which actually serve to make the entire procedure even more unpleasant) offering their knuckleheaded opinions on the latest games, apparently in the belief that we give a shit what a bespectacled, upper middle class, big girl's blouse 13 year old thinks about *anything*.

Why have they got these jobs in the first place? Are they experts? No – they're far too young to remember older platforms or titles, and probably too stupid to appreciate the technical merits of the products they're reviewing. Perhaps, then, they're supposed to be representative of the average gameplaying kid? I doubt it – they're not like any game-fan kids I've ever met (for a start, you never see them carrying knives). Maybe they've been hired for their consummate presentational skills? Wrong again; their delivery is stilted, their language clumsy, their mannerisms stomach-churning

"The problem is, children's TV is the only place where you see games being discussed at all..."



beyond belief.

So why *have* they got these jobs? I suspect the answer is a simple and depressing one: they're related to someone who works on the show. Someone who deserves to be sacked and replaced by something more talented; a baby chimpanzee perhaps. Or a large piece of ham.

And as for that bloke who narrates *Movies, Games & Videos*. I mean, Jaysus! What is the matter with him? Does he talk to his friends and family like that? Has he

actually got any friends? Are they all deaf? There's something about his delivery that drives me mad. Just imagine being stuck on a long haul flight with that gibbering idiot spewing out his verbal diarrhoea for eleven hours. How can anyone in their right mind take what he says about videogames seriously? The only way I can watch it at home is with the sound turned right down and handcuffed to a chair. If I hear just one tiny, patronising word it's enough to send me over the edge. And what's with that stupid competition they have at the end with the ridiculously simple questions? Just how stupid do you have to be to enter? Do they just assume

that people who play computer games are completely stupid or still at Primary school? What's more, the prizes are always completely crap and the call costs a small fortune.

Perhaps I'm being a little unfair. After all, I shouldn't really be watching kids' TV anyway – even if it is

perhaps the sole remaining televisual niche that doesn't insult the viewer's intelligence (the bulk of ITV's prime time output would provoke snorts of lofty derision from a class of remedial eight year olds). The problem is, aside from occasional news reports on in-game violence (which treat the games under discussion as if they were strange transmissions from Planet Satan) children's TV is the only place where you see games – or computers in general – being discussed at all, unless you count the Computer Channel on satellite and cable – which I don't, because I can't stand that either.

There's got to be room in the schedules for something better. And if they broadcast it in place of *Goodnight Sweetheart*, *The Girlie Show*, or – please God, please – *The Funky Bunker*, that'd - well, that'd be just swell. **Z**

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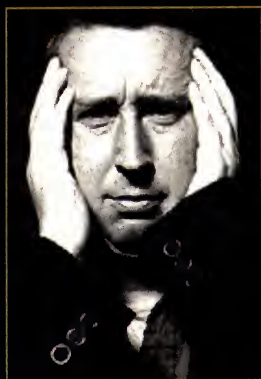
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**He's afraid of...
buying hoovers
(and pigeon
infiltration)**

Mr Cursor



Y HOOVER PACKED UP ABOUT THREE YEARS ago and I never got round to buying another one... and I don't own a dustpan and brush (or have the inclination to get down on my hands and knees to use one, even if I did). So, guess what

that adds up to, regarding my scabby 12th floor council flat? Yup, the carpets are 'a bit dirty'.

Now to digress for a moment. If you're a regular reader you might remember that not too long ago I'd been watching *Bush Tucker Man* on telly, and had learnt that beetles could be a prime source of nutrition, so I popped across the capital to London Zoo, 'acquired' a selection of cockroaches from the insect house, and embarked upon a breeding programme. I enjoyed several delicious cockroach-based meals, but then accidentally knocked the containment tank over, inadvertently causing a cockroach infestation in the rest of the tower block.

But what's life about, if not to learn by your mistakes? Which brings us back to now, and to my dilemma.

Problem 1: I have disgusting carpets.

Problem 2: I have no vacuum cleaner.

Problem 3: I have no desire to waste money on anything less than a Dyson 'bagless' hoover, but these things cost roughly the same as a Nintendo 64. Which should I get?

Problem 4: *Mario Karts* is excellent, but the carpets, the carpets, what shall I do about the carpets?...

Solution: London Zoo once more.

Top tippety tips

Yes! If I want exotic (or hallucinogenic) plants I visit Kew Gardens, and take cuttings. Conversely if I want insects (ie the aforementioned cockroaches) then I visit the Regent's Park Insect House. But this time it wasn't cockroaches I was after, it was dung beetles, and I got five – two male and three female. Up to speed yet? That's right, we're talking 'mini biological carpet cleaners'. And dung beetles reproduce occasionally too, meaning their overall cleaning prowess increases at a sort of exponential rate. Not bad, eh? Especially as they're 'free'.

However, the clearance process is a tad on the slow side, so I decided to leave them to it for a couple of days, leaving the lounge door open to give them direct access to my balcony – on which I'd scattered a layer of sand: the ideal nesting place for dung beetles. They'd gather my carpet muck into shite-balls, roll the things outside, and then go back for more. And again, and again. All I'd have to do, on my return, would be to shovel the balcony sand (and cackballs) into a bin-liner. With this in mind I buggered off to a chum's place, in Brighton.

Down to Geordie's

Geordie's place is cool. It's a squat full of musical equipment surrounded by several other squats, so you can make as much noise as you want. And I'd brought my bass guitar, as always,

so it was a case of bollocks jam sessions ahoy, for an entire weekend. Superb. The first evening went brilliantly: if we'd recorded it it'd probably have been a number one album. (Yeah, right – Ed) Evening two, however, wasn't so smart: the bloke who normally plays drums had been arrested that day, so 'Mad Shaz' said she'd do the honours instead, which would've been fine, except she was crap: schlopp, thwuck, t-t-t-twack, b-boing, frrrrt, ksssssh.

It brought to mind my sister's anecdote about when she had to interview Iron Maiden for *Smash Hits*, but couldn't remember which band she was actually talking to – was it Iron Maiden (correct) or Def Leppard (incorrect)? To avoid a monumental gaff, she had to continually remind herself that the drummer in Iron Maiden has four limbs, while the Def Leppard drummer has a missing arm. And then I realised that Mad Shaz sounded like a drummer who didn't

I desire a Dyson 'bagless' hoover, but they cost the same as a Nintendo 64. Which should I get?

actually have any arms at all (or legs).

Then I wondered how long it'll be before someone invents a sort of thought-powered drumming 'hat' doofer, with electrodes... it can't be that hard, surely? Your brain's only got to trigger about eight drums and cymbals, after all. Then I wondered whether Stephen Hawking would make a good drummer. (Wow, imagine being in a band with him on drums, eh? And he could do 'robotron' backing vocals too.) But then Mad Shaz got so out of time that the jam session ground to a halt, so we watched a vid instead. Then it was Monday, and time to go home...

Ah! Lovely clean carpets

Or maybe not. My flat resembled a scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. My open back door – my 'dung beetle exit' – had also operated as a 'pigeon entrance'. (The flat was full of 'em, and they'd covered the carpets in shit.) The dung beetles were all dead, incidentally, mercilessly butchered and eaten by the birds. What a waste! And emptying my flat of the 'flying rats' is another tale altogether – it took an age, and was horrific.

To cut a long story short, I'm now unable to leave my balcony door open, even for short periods, because pigeons (or at least those that survived my crazed home-coming frenzy) have a selective memory, and as far as they're concerned I now live in *their* nest. So I've had to fork out 60 quid on an air pistol. And, thanks to the unbelievable amount of dried pigeon shit on the carpets and furniture, my next purchase will have to be a Stimvac industrial deep steam cleaner, which costs nearly 800 quid. I'll have to sell the Nintendo. Bastards! **Z**



Next thing on the agenda: work out how to get the bastard pigeons to use the hoover (when I get round to buying one, that is)...

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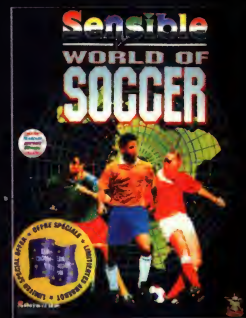


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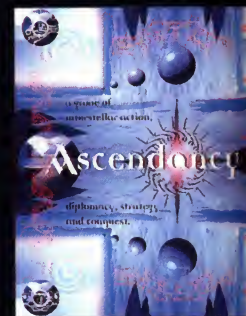
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